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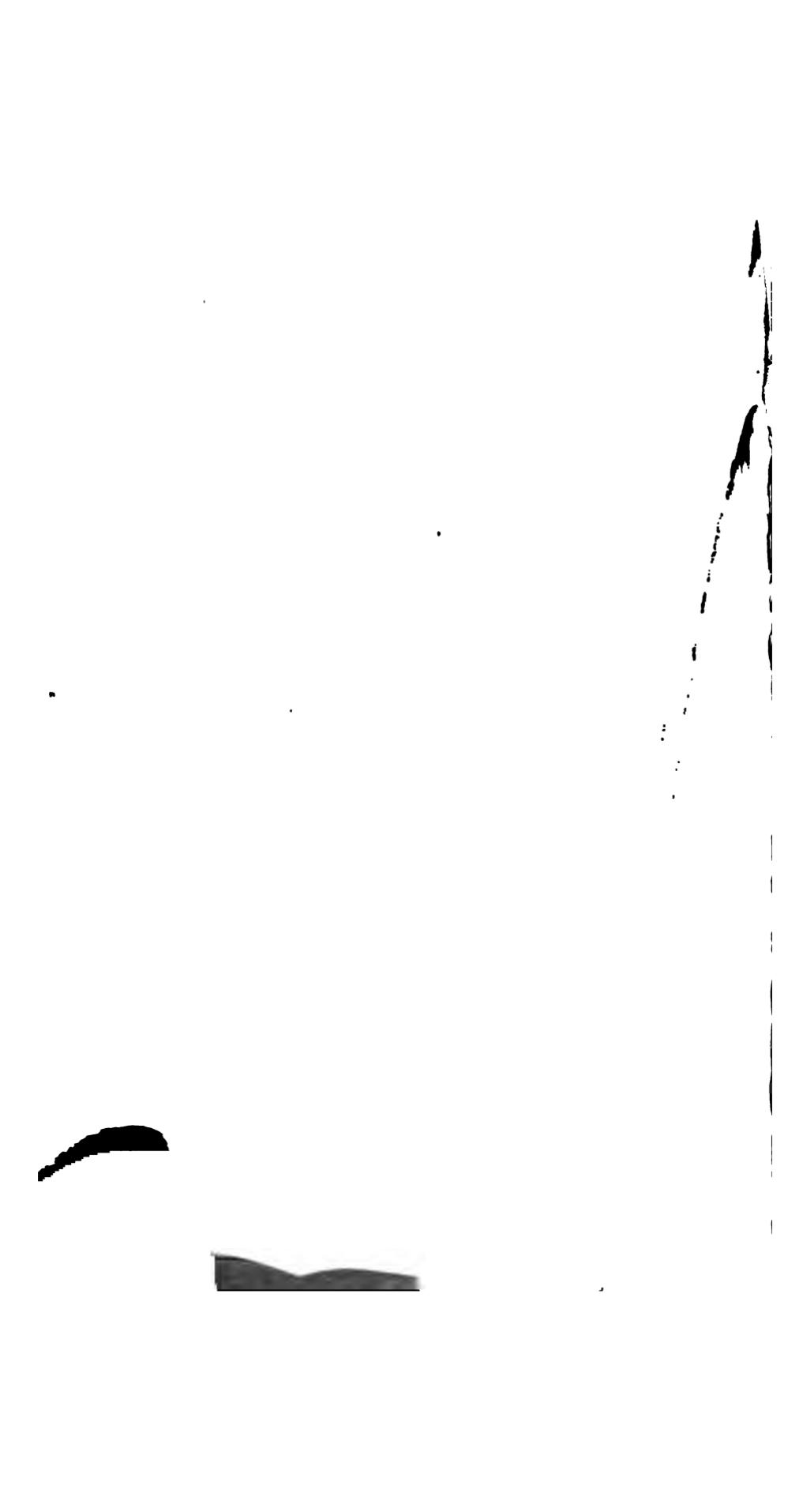


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## **RUSSIA OF TO-DAY**

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# Russia of To-day

FROM THE GERMAN OF  
BARON E. VON DER BRÜGGEN  
"BY  
M. SANDWITH



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## PREFACE

RUSSIAN influence in the affairs of European States has been growing steadily for a hundred years—it received a check only when the formation of the German Empire confined the dominating influence of Russia's physical power on the European continent within certain limits. This new order in the balance of European powers has, to a considerable extent, benefited England, whose greatest political opponent has been for some time Russia.

England's position with regard to Russia differs from that of other European powers towards this semi-European Eastern Empire chiefly in this, that whilst they, at the present time, lay greater stress upon their economic relations with the great export country of raw materials, England has more especially to face a political rival. Nevertheless, the cultural and economic conditions of Russia must be of the greatest interest to the English politician, as much with regard to commerce as in order to enable him to gauge correctly the political power of which Russia disposes to-day and upon which she may possibly count in the future. In the present volume I have endeavoured to depict, as briefly as possible, the economic, social and administrative foundations upon which the Russian State edifice is resting to-day, and which, under normal conditions, ought to correspond to the measure of her external power. The English public, less influenced by Russian securities than, for example, the French, will, I presume, be all the better qualified to pass an unbiased judgment.

E. VON DER BRÜGGEN.



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# RUSSIA OF TO-DAY

## CHAPTER I

### EXTERNAL GROWTH

IN olden times Russia consisted of more than seventy small states, and this was perhaps the happiest time of her existence. At the close of the sixteenth century Moscow had destroyed almost all these principalities, and a century later Peter the Great had changed the semi-Asiatic, semi-barbarous Grand Duchy of Moscow into a semi-European Empire—Russia. An immense empire evolved from the struggles with Sweden and Turkey—as modern Germany arose from the Austrian and French wars. And yet, how different, internally, from the latter. Without a culture of its own it stepped from the very first into the arena of a civilised Europe, claiming political equality. In however hopeless a state of confusion and exhaustion Peter had left it, he had at least had the intention of developing the power for civilisation in his people, and had sought in a hundred different ways to rouse them from their slumbers. His successors left to decay what he had begun, and did almost nothing for the development of the people. In a hundred years there was not accomplished as much as Frederick William I. alone did for Prussia. Catherine, too, did but little for the welfare of the Russians. Yet, from the time of Peter onwards, experiments were made in government and legislation, innovations were introduced here and there,

and old customs abolished, fitfully and without perseverance, mostly without understanding.

A hundred years after the first appearance of the great reformer Russia had become a great European Power, but internally she had advanced but very little on the road to material and intellectual progress. Show, and nothing but outward show; internally the old misery, the grinding poverty, bribery, ignorance, a show of religion, the tyranny of officials. Only three things had been evolved—a brilliant court, an immense army, and the enslavement of all classes.<sup>1</sup>

These three things were indispensable if Russia was to play the part of a first-class Power, which was the aim of all Peter's political striving. A brilliant court to illustrate the new Empire, a large army for conquest and for influence in Europe, the compulsory service of the nobility, the restriction of the town population to the towns, the serfdom of the peasants—and all these necessary only in order to strengthen the power of the Government, only in order to have officials, soldiers, money. To further these aims of glory and external power the strength of the people, feeble though it was, was never spared.

These were two centuries of great external success, of continued territorial expansion. The following statistics have been drawn up with regard to the growth of the Russian Empire:—

The daily growth has been—from the year 1500 to 1900, 130 sq. kms.;<sup>2</sup> from the year 1676 (death of Alexei, father of Peter I.) until 1876, 90 sq. kms.; from the accession of Catherine II., 1762, to that of Alexander II., 1856, 80 sq. kms. If, further, the addition of territory from the accession of Alexander II. to that of Nicholas II. in 1894, in which year Russia comprised 22,400,000 German sq. miles, is counted, this gives a daily addition of about 257 sq. kms. One has, by the way, to take into consideration that during this period the American possessions of Russia of 27,500

<sup>1</sup> Brückner, *Europeanisation of Russia*.

<sup>2</sup> 1 sq. km. = 247·114 acres.

sq. miles (100,000 English miles) were sold to the United States. The growth, therefore, has increased in speed from 1856 to 1894, and is still so considerable that if Germany were to extend her frontiers day after day by 237 German sq. miles—not counting the colonies beyond the seas—she would soon not know what to do with all these possessions. Every six months an addition of land of the size of Bavaria, every year an extension of the Empire amounting to 86,000 German sq. miles. For this our assimilative power would scarcely suffice, however greedy we might be and remain in spite of all our Colonies. Russia, too, had not digested all this accumulation of land as recently as forty years ago; she had not assimilated but only swallowed it, so to speak, and if the growth has increased in speed during the last fifty years, it now shows a tendency to even faster growth, as the latest events in the region of the Amur and in Manchuria go to prove.

Has this growth of Russia been for the welfare of the Russian people, of the tax-paying Russian? For, ultimately, all statecraft has but this aim in view—to serve the people, and all political development but this one purpose—to help the masses, by whose strength it is borne. True, the glory of arms and of sovereign power are amongst the things which a warlike and ambitious nation holds dear. The more barbarous such a nation, the more it generally prizes them, in so far as they are the outcome of its own crude strength. In the time of the upheaval of nations the glory of war was considered by most peoples the choicest gift of the gods: the Huns of Attila, the Mongols of Genghis Khan, no doubt reckoned it a great virtue in their rulers to be led by them to ever new struggles, to the conquest and rule of distant lands. But to-day we no longer think after the manner of Huns and Mongols, but as members of civilised communities. We are not indifferent to the glory of war and of sovereignty; but we no longer prize them for their own sakes, only in so far as they furnish the means to mature and strengthen us materially, intellectually and morally. Not only out-

ward glory and power are necessary for the welfare of a people, but everything which gives the strength and the capacity to make them serve the real needs of the nation in peaceful internal culture and civilisation. Yea, war and conquest have lost so much in our estimation that they are accounted as evils nowadays, only to be tolerated in cases of extreme necessity or to further some great end of civilisation. This, at anyrate, is the direction in which the feelings of the civilised nations of Europe tend at present.

Are love of war and of conquest then national characteristics of the Russian people? This question can scarcely be answered in the affirmative if one examines the history of the past. When the Normans founded their dominions it was just in the conflict with the Slavonic tribes that they met with remarkably feeble resistance, considering their own small numbers. Turks and Mongolian races gave them far more trouble. Just as weak was the resistance against the invading Mongols in the thirteenth century. Not the Slavonic peoples, but the Norman princes were warlike and ambitious, even when all power was vested in the Prince of Moscow alone. With the extinction of this Moscovitic Norman dynasty love of war and of conquest waned, for the Polish struggles of the seventeenth century originated in Poland and not in Moscow. It was Peter who again seized the conquering sword of his own accord; but even after his days the cause of the frequent wars was not to be found in the people, but in the ambition, the cupidity of the great of the land, and in the desire of its rulers of foreign origin to enhance the splendour of their throne.

Amongst his people Peter had met with a very strong and distinct aversion to his conquering policy. What Prince Alexei and the old Russian party, at whose head he stood, wished for was expressly the relinquishing of war and conquest. The new Russia they hated; they wished to hand back to their former owners the conquered lands, to annihilate the Empire, in order to restore the ancient Grand Duchy with its Asiatic

customs and peace. Alexei and many others suffered death for this idea, but it did not die with them. It was revived again and again, in a weaker form it may be, but fundamentally the same: the idea to turn away from Europe, to establish once more in Moscow the old national state of well-being, without rule over the foreign peoples of Europe, without wars and with fewer taxes. This was the direction in which the desires of Golizyn and Dolgoruki tended under Peter II. and Anna. The attempt to restrict Anna's absolute power had essentially the same aim, in view as the party of Alexei. By raising Elizabeth to the throne it was anticipated that similar hopes would be fulfilled. And no doubt these aims, which the most influential families of the land pursued, were thoroughly popular. The great mass of the leading classes wished to break with the ambitious policy of Peter and of his disciples, Ostermann, Munnich, Bestuchew; they wished to fight neither against Turks, nor Persians, nor Swedes, nor Prussians, and would have been ready, even a hundred years after the appearance of Peter, to relinquish St Petersburg itself and to renounce all interference in European quarrels. This Muscovitic party was characteristically Russian; not so Peter and his successors, and one may well doubt, even to-day, whether political right and reason were on the side of Peter and not rather with his opponents. For the success of his policy does not correspond to the sacrifices which the Russian people have had to make for it. After a hundred years of victories, conquests and glory, the conditions under which nobility, clergy and peasant lived were not better, but more wretched than before.

Thoughtful men recognised this even in those days and raised their warning voices. In the time of Catherine II. an Alsatian wrote as follows:—<sup>1</sup> “Above all Russia must avoid war. Never will Russia reap the fruits of Peter's labours, never will she turn the balance of commerce in her favour, never will she become en-

<sup>1</sup> B. Scherer, *History of Russian Trade*.

lightened and flourishing until she has renounced the love of conquest." Rarely has a prophet prophesied more truly than did this Alsatian. Not long after him the minister, Panin, wrote, in his memorial of the year 1801,<sup>1</sup> "La guerre la plus heureuse ne peut qu'affaiblir et augmenter les embarras de son gouvernement, en desséminant des forces, qui depuis les dernières acquisitions ne sont plus proportionnées à l'étendue des limites." Now Panin was one of the most astute and most patriotic statesmen Russia has ever produced. Even in his days the Imperial Court and its immediate circle were pervaded by a longing for war and glory; beyond St Petersburg, and above all amongst the lower classes, the longing was rather to hear and to see nothing of Europe and to be delivered from the endless recruiting. How could it be otherwise, since forty years of war had thrown the country into incredible internal disorder and into a state of dire poverty, when Catherine the "Divine" died. Although Paul had drawn from all these facts the right conclusion, that it was imperative to renounce from henceforth all policy of conquest, he nevertheless all but launched into a war with England, in his capacity of Grand Master of the Knights of St John, in order to obtain the Island of Malta, an object which, after all, was not of primary importance to Russia. Scarcely was Paul deceased when the guidance of foreign politics came into the hands, first of the peace-loving Panin, then of Prince Kotschubei, who was just as determined to leave foreign affairs alone in order to concentrate all his attention on internal development. But again affairs took an unexpected turn. Russian armies swarmed over the whole of Europe; men and millions were sunk in the abyss of foreign politics, and as a result the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was conquered. Much honour and much future care! At the close of his life, in the year 1824, Alexander himself confessed, "Honour and glory we have not lacked: but when I consider how little has been done for the country itself, the thought of it

<sup>1</sup> Brückner, *Materials for a Biography of Panin*, vol. vi. p. 18.

lies upon my heart like a hundredweight."<sup>1</sup> And yet Alexander at least had his Speranski. Not much later the political economist, Fr. List, warned Russia of the danger of too great an extension of her frontiers and of too much striving after political influence in Europe.<sup>2</sup> There was therefore no lack of men who recognised the danger which beset the path into which Peter had led Russia. In the reign of Alexander I. various parties had been formed amongst the officials and officers whose striving was after a freer form of government. This desire had its root not so much in the practical recognition of Russia's needs as in the theoretical admiration for things and doctrines perceived in Europe during the years of war. By the great mass of the people the burden of war was acutely felt, but more patiently borne than similar burdens in former days, for the Napoleonic invasion had wrought a great change in the feelings and ideas of the Russian people. The burning of Moscow in the year 1812 awakened a desire of war similar to that roused by the burning of Moscow in the days of the Tartars. Against the French, as against the Tartars, there flamed up from the very depth of the nation a burning desire for war, which, as is always the case in such wars of primitive peoples, took a religious character. These Napoleonic wars were the first popular wars since the rising against the Polish rule at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They were, or at least they seemed to be, forced upon the people, and they rose accordingly in self-defence. No love of war or of conquest prompted them. None of the endless wars of the eighteenth century into which the people were driven had had such an effect on the Russian as the campaign against Napoleon to the gates of Paris. As he saw "the Gauls and their twenty confederate nations" fleeing across his frontiers he had a feeling, perchance, as though at last he were driving all the hated foreigners, all the host of distasteful customs intro-

<sup>1</sup> Schilder, *Alexander I.*, vol. iv. p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. List, by C. Gentsch, p. 73.

duced by Peter, out of the country. Even until to-day a thanksgiving service in commemoration of the expulsion of the Napoleonic hordes is held every year on Christmas Day in the Russian churches; but to the lower classes these hordes were not a French army but rather the sum-total of everything foreign—of all those hated Europeans who for more than two hundred years had been so importunate. They were “infidels” in the same sense as Tartars and Turks, the arch-enemies of Church and people.

This deep-rooted enmity against Tartars and Turks has, until quite recently, been a potent factor in Russian foreign politics. After having thrown off almost entirely the humiliating remains of the Tartar yoke towards the end of the sixteenth century, the struggle against the remaining Khanates in the south and south-east continued in the shape of occasional wars on the one side or the other, and in the raids with which the Cossacks of the Don and Dnieper occupied their time. These mutual raids, providing as they did rich poetical material, penetrated deeply into the consciousness of the whole Russian people, even before they had attained real political importance for the State. There, in the free encampments on the Don, in the Setsche, in the Cossack camps of the Lower Dnieper, there lived a real love for war. There the Russian was inflamed, not only with the longing for booty but also with a thirst for honour, for glory, and for battles. In the fight against the Crimean Tartars and the Turks there grew up a truly warlike race, and with its warlike spirit a love of liberty, as it has grown in no other branch of the Russian people.

True, the former freedom, the independence from any other power than that of the self-chosen captain (Hetmann) died out, and the Cossacks were, from the seventeenth century onward, gradually brought under the Polish and Russian yoke. When the left bank of the Dnieper and the town of Kiev had become Russian in the seventeenth century, Peter I. rushed forward, and there was an end of the independence of the

Cossacks of the Dnieper after the Battle of Poltava and the death of Mazepa. With force and cunning their freedom was gradually curtailed and their resistance broken. Catherine II. subjugated also the eastern encampments, and since her days there have been no more free Cossacks. But the tradition of their struggles against the unbelievers lived on in the Russian people, and from the time of Peter I. this tradition became a strong support to the many warlike enterprises which were undertaken by the Russian rulers against Tartars and Turks. After having rendered the Tartars innocuous, by the conquest of the Crimea under Catherine, warlike tradition began to turn against the Turks. Not so much, however, through any particular feelings on the part of the people as through the promptings of a conquest-loving Government. In the reign of Anna the ambitious campaigns of Munich, with their merciless sacrifices of human life, were so abhorred by the people that they would willingly have borne the annihilation of their own armies in order to purchase peace. They felt that the sacrifices were too great for the aims which they did not look upon as their own. It was Catherine who first gave the popular imagination a definite goal by forming the plan to take Constantinople itself, to drive the Turks out of Europe, and to found a new Russian Czardom on the Bosphorus. With the help of the Church this popular tradition against the Tartars was changed into the sacred task of regaining Byzantium for the orthodox Church, and of delivering the Russian brother tribes of the Balkan Peninsula from the yoke of the unbelievers. And indeed since then these wars against the Turks have been more popular than any which the Russian rulers waged in those days, until at last, in the year 1876, the Czar was no longer the instigator, but was driven himself into declaring war by his subjects and by the clergy.

For in the meantime another change had taken place. Both the Turkish War of 1828 and the Crimean War of 1853 were the result of the monarch's endeavour to

strengthen Russia's position as a first-class European Power. Neither in 1828 nor in 1853 were there any real Russian interests at stake, the endangering of which necessitated a war. It was only a question of Russian prestige, of the no doubt glorious but, as far as culture and material welfare were concerned, very platonic influence of Russia over Greece and the Balkan States, as well as of the even less jeopardised position of the Russian throne, which, from the nation's point of view, was in no way endangered by the Western Powers, who only opposed an unduly inflated arrogance, a too arbitrary protectorate of Russia over the Balkan Peninsula. Still less was the struggle of 1849 against the rebellious Hungarians born of popular feeling. The interests of the people had nothing whatever to do with this rebellion—they saw in it no advantage, but only sacrifices, as had been the case more than once before—in the Seven Years' War, in the campaigns of Suworow in Italy, and in the fantastic and erratic campaign against Napoleon, which ended with Austerlitz and the Peace of Tilsit. But in the war of 1876 the old popular tradition came to life again with all its ecclesiastical and national enthusiasm, goaded on by ambitious party leaders, who had risen meanwhile on the wave of internal struggles. It was the expression of a change wrought by these very struggles in the national consciousness of the leading classes.

## CHAPTER II

### INTERNAL STRUGGLES

THE national consciousness awakened in 1813 was stirred afresh by the Polish Rebellion of 1830, but far more deeply by that of 1863. Next to the Tartar and Turk, the Russian had always the Pole in his imagination as the arch-enemy, even though the fear of him had disappeared in the course of two centuries. Meanwhile, a striving, shaping power had begun to permeate the national self-consciousness by the spread of culture, by the more general participation in public affairs, but above all by the Press. When mention has been made formerly of the Russian people as the bearers of a tradition, of national opinions and aspirations, this is only to be understood in a very restricted sense. The great mass of the peasants had, and have to this day, no opinions or wishes as regards general affairs ; all politics are centred in the Czar and in the Church, and they follow the lead of these two powers blindly. The traditions arising out of the wars with Tartars, Poles and Turks, and spreading into the village life of the peasant, were almost completely lost in the tradition of fighting for Czar and Church—*almost* completely, for side by side with it the understanding of the common man for his own nationality had been awakened. It is not only to-day that the cry, “Our brethren are being defeated !” is certain to bring the common man in Russia to his feet ; it is not only now that the tie of a common nationality has been strengthened, as we see it to-day, but the consciousness of this existing tie was never the source of an active desire for conquest, it was only aroused by an external attack. It was defensive

rather ; it flared up at the call, "Our brethren are being attacked!" but on the whole the national character was, and is, not warlike but peace-loving. If we Germans had possessed but one particle of the national feeling which has inspired the Russian for the last hundred or two hundred years we would not have had to wait so long for a united Germany.

Apart from these feelings and mere sensations in the masses, a political opinion of course existed amongst the upper classes, and these consisted of the nobility, as there were very few town inhabitants. For since Peter the Great had made every nobleman into a serf of the State, so to speak, since every nobleman had to serve in the army or as an official, officials and officers were of course noblemen, and thus the nobility alone formed the class which took part in political life, and with whom—with the exception of Pugatschew's rebellion—originated all political movements independent of, or in opposition to the Government. There have been innumerable peasant riots, especially under Nicholas I. ; they were, however, not of a political nature, but only local revolts against the encroachments of the nobility and officials. Politically only the nobility were of importance. In the eighteenth century the great families of the land, and in the nineteenth the lesser nobility also, alone had a part in the life of the State.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century a class had emerged from the ranks of the nobility itself, which forsook the old traditions of the great families by turning towards European ways of thinking. The closer union with Europe which Peter the Great had always desired, the penetrating of school education, and of a hundred different elements of culture and of civilisation, had so far advanced that, side by side with the Government, an opinion was able to form itself, which, neither comprising the people nor the nobility and only showing itself rarely in public, nevertheless formed the stock from which a more or less public opinion (more or less independent of the Government) arose. These first awakenings, these childhood years, of

young Russia—with their philosophising and politicising attempts, with their Moscow student circles, with their talented and critique-loving young authors—have been often enough described by German writers. This young Russia had scarcely thrown off its egg-shells when the liberal years of Alexander II. brought the abolition of serfdom and the reforms in administration and justice. There was great rejoicing, great hopes were cherished for free development, the number of adherents greatly increased, and still more did self-confidence. But during these great liberal reforms of 1861-1864 the Polish Rebellion broke out. It found the nation in all its strata in a state of ferment by reason of these very reforms. A people inflamed by liberal ideas, but also, amongst the educated and half-educated classes, by a great thirst for deeds. A youthful Press full of self-confidence, a new national power without a past, without definite aims, with much longing and little understanding. Boyish impatience eagerly seized upon the opportunity for greater tasks, and the Polish Rebellion offered such: the Fatherland could be saved, the nation avenged. This was worth more than all the internal reforms in their Fatherland! Here their young strength could be tried.

The Press seized this auspicious moment and threw itself heart and soul into the affray with the national flag in its hand. It succeeded in placing itself side by side with the State army at the head of a great part of the upper classes, with an ideal thought, a popular feeling. Now, for the first time, public opinion, borne by a part of the people, and at the same time directed towards real political aims, showed itself as it had never been able to show itself before, either at the time of the conspiracies of the eighteenth century or in the "States" assemblies of the Romanoffs. This political rebellion has had for Poland great and disastrous consequences, the strength, and unfortunately also the pernicious influence of which are scarcely inferior to the effect which they have had upon the whole Russian Empire. As the public saw itself, on its first appearance, face to

face with an internal, not, as in 1813, an external, enemy, and as, following the armies, it vanquished this enemy easily and with recognition from its Government, its power, and the wish to see this power grow, increased. The position thus won led to power and also to exaltation, which, after the conclusion of the Polish Rebellion, required fresh fields of activity. The newly-acquired sense of popular power demanded a conflict, thirsted for it, in order to realise its strength, to develop its power, to make itself respected by the Government, to justify its existence, yea, to make itself indispensable to the Government and to the people. But it requires two to make a quarrel, and the question was how to find opponents, to drag them into the light of the rising Russian sun. And the required opponents were found.

The Government had always had to take into account the feelings of either the great families, the army or the officials. In foreign politics, more especially in many wars, the desire to increase the splendour of the crown by glorious deeds, to draw the attention of the subjects away from internal conditions to real or apparent Russian interests abroad, had always been an important factor. Now that this desire made itself more strongly felt the absolute power of the Czar saw itself all of a sudden driven hither and thither between two strong political currents, at the head of which stood Katkoff and Herzen—the former as representative of the young Nationalism, the latter as representative of the even younger Socialism. By giving the Press of the young Muscovitic Russia immediate influence upon the solution of the Polish question the claims of the Press and of its wire-pullers had been allowed to grow apace. Soon the waves of these two streams rose dangerously high. Whilst the Nationalists of Moscow, in unison with the Government, belaboured the crushed and beaten Poles, the party whose aim it was to do away with the power of the State waxed stronger and stronger; on the one side Muravieff became a national hero, on the other Bakunin, and

later Sassulitsch. The more dangerously Nihilism was spreading, the more did the importance of the opposite party increase. At one time one journalist alone governed almost the whole State. People listened more readily to Katkoff than to any other Minister, and Katkoff struck the iron while it was hot; his aim was to goad on and to strengthen the self-confidence, the national consciousness of the people, to which end he reverted to the old traditions of the power of the Muscovitic Boyars, as they had appeared in the eighteenth century, and for the last time in the attempts and ideas of the two Panins towards the end of the nineteenth century. Although the Government was occupied in searching the archives of the Notables' assemblies in certain circles, this in itself could be of no importance so long as the Government dared not draw practical conclusions from such ideas and studies. The Muscovitic party found a freer field in the attack which was now made upon the Frontier Provinces. Here the national fists could be tried, here Russian muscles could be strengthened, here the Government used neither bit nor bridle. If it had striven hitherto in endless wars to increase its own outward greatness, there now began a struggle for expansion and power in the name of the nation.

In Poland the principal struggles with regard to legislation and administration were over in the year 1867; the Muscovitic Reformers of the young Russian camp, such as Tscherkaski and Miljutin, had played at high politics, just as Muravieff and Kaufmann had done in Lithuania. But the North-German League had just been founded, and this offered to the young party of defenders of the Russian nation a very welcome opportunity for new deeds, for a turn of their columns against the Germans, especially against those in the Baltic Provinces. It is true these could be reproached with nothing in the least contrary or dangerous to the State, but there was no need of that at all. The nation must have something to do. Russian self-respect must be awakened, the political activity of the present party,

developed in Poland, must be continued somewhere and somehow if it was not to sink back into the old political slumber, or be dispensed with altogether by the Government. Hence these Germans must be viewed with suspicion ; Bismarck must needs be credited with sinister designs with regard to these old German settlements. The Emperor Alexander II. was belaboured on all sides—on the left by Katkoff and Pobedenoszew, on the right by people such as the Hessian Minister, Baron von Dalwigk. He let himself be persuaded that danger was threatening, but how little he wished for or conceived the destruction which his interference in the rights of the Provinces, as announced in the autumn of '67 in Riga, would entail, his own words go to show. On the 12th October 1867 the representatives of the four Baltic Provinces had an audience of the Emperor, when he addressed them as follows :—“Messieurs, permettez-moi de réduire cette question à ces véritables proportions. L'ukase qui prescrit l'usage de la langue russe date de 1850. Il n'a pas été exécuté jusqu'ici pour plusieurs raisons, entre autre parcequ'il a présenté de véritables difficultés, mais en partie aussi parceque les gouverneurs généraux ont peut-être eu pour vous trop de condescendance. L'ukase, vous le savez, n'émane pas de moi, mais de feu mon père et je dois y tenir et j'y tiens à ce que sa volonté soit exécutée. Ce que vous me dites de vos sentiments, je n'en doute nullement et je n'en ai jamais douté. Mais aussi, mes amis, je dis à dessein mes amis, vous n'auriez dû douter dès miens ; ils sont toujours les mêmes. Par l'exécution de l'ukase on ne touche aucunement ni à votre droit, ni à vos priviléges de caste. Jamais on n'exigera de vous l'emploi d'une autre langue que la vôtre, et l'on continuera à correspondre avec vos ressorts et tribunaux de province en allemand, comme par le passé. Mais la langue de l'état étant le russe, cette langue doit être en usage dans tous les Gouvernements-Verwaltungen comme langue officielle. C'est aussi pourquoi je me suis servi de cette langue toutes les fois que je me suis adressé à vous publiquement. Cependant vous savez combien j'aime à

vous parler allemand, et si je parle français en ce moment, c'est que je m'exprime plus facilement. Je comprends parfaitement que vous soyez blessés par les menées de la presse. Aussi ai-je toujours blâmé, moi, cette presse infame, qui, au lieu de vous unir, tache de nous désunir. Je crache sur cette presse, qui voudrait vous mettre sur la même ligne avec les Polonais. J'estime votre nationalité et j'en serais fier comme vous. J'ai toujours dit, qu'il était stupide de reprocher à quelqu'un son extraction. Ainsi, messieurs, calmez-vous et ne craignez rien. Il n'est pas question d'un changement de système. Du reste j'ai donné carte blanche au gouverneur-général. Je ne veux d'ailleurs, ni que la chose se fasse du jour au lendemain, ni que les employés soient forcés de quitter le service, ni en général que rien soit cassé. Et maintenant, messieurs, restez persuadés que je vous aime et que jamais je n'oublierai que vos pères et grandpères ont servi l'état et versé le sang pour la Russia. Que Dieu vous guide ! "

This speech exactly describes the situation. Here is the Emperor, obliged against his will to bring into execution long-forgotten ordinances of his father's, driven to it by a strong political opinion which itself had been strengthened by the participation of non-Governmental, unofficial powers in the policy towards the Poles. What are the intentions of this hateful Press, despised, yea hated, by himself, but directing those powers? What in fact these powers themselves desire the monarch openly confesses: To sow enmity between the Czar, the Government and the German inhabitants of the provinces. Enmity must be roused at all costs, a struggle must begin in order to strengthen the importance of this unofficial political power. Whilst fighting against Poles and Germans the idea was at the same time to restrict absolute autocracy, and far greater pride was taken in the thought of having produced and raised such men as Katkoff, Tscherkaski out of its own midst into influential positions side by side with Ministers than in all the dignities which the State and the Czar himself could bestow.

The Emperor Alexander no doubt found it difficult to interfere in leased rights and healthy conditions even in this mild fashion. But young Nationalist Russia rushed forward into the breach and began its work of destruction, which it called *re-construction*. Unfortunately these national fanatics were supported against Germany by outward events. The events of 1870-1871 disturbed the harmony between the Throne and Society—the Czar was reproached with having helped Prussia in the unification of Germany. Perhaps Alexander felt that there was a little political justification in this reproach, although any other attitude towards the most friendly of the great Powers, and one which had lent her good services in 1854 and 1864, would have been disloyal. Still, the fact remains that Society grumbled and Alexander lost the power to protect his German subjects. The war of 1877, and later the Congress of Berlin, had the same effect. Public opinion, which in the days of Nicholas was only the opinion of Court society, now rested upon a much broader basis. The Press, the clergy, officers, officials, yea, even professors and students, had their share in it, and worked through the Court society on the Ministers and the ruler. Hitherto the Czars and Czarinas had made wars and conquered countries in the interests of their own policy, which very often did not coincide with the interests of the people. Now it was young Russia which devised war and succeeded in having its way. A crusade for the deliverance of the brother Slavs crushed by the unbeliever was to strengthen the feeling of nationality, the self-confidence of the people, the importance of its representatives, such as Tschernakoff, Ignatieff, Katkoff, in short, to strengthen young Russia striving for political power. Report has it that the Emperor was driven to act by the Czarina and his father-confessor; but behind them there was a great multitude which in its turn drove the Empress and the father-confessor and whoever else had the ear of the monarch. It is thought probable that, apart from the Chancellor Prince Gortchakoff, the inclination of

Russian diplomacy for the war was neither general nor strong. Early in 1890 a memorial by Mr. Jonin, formerly Minister in Cettinje, later Minister to the Court of Sofia, regarding the war of 1877, was circulated amongst some members of the Foreign Office, to which place it had been sent. In it the diplomat, since deceased as Minister at Berne, showed how entirely unprepared and against her will Russia had entered upon this war, since, with only four army corps, she could not possibly have had the intention of entering upon a serious conflict but only of intimidating her enemy, as was indeed proved by Gurko's march of 300 km. She could not have seriously believed in the war, since she had neither a definite aim nor a decisive plan, and was negotiating with all the Powers at Vienna, Berlin and London without coming to any definite arrangement, and finally arrived at the decision, in Vienna, that, should the conditions in the Balkan Peninsula undergo a change, Austria was to take possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some Russian diplomats, he says, had insisted upon defining at least the frontiers of this territory, but Prince Gortchakoff absolutely refused his consent, because he wished to keep a free hand. "And yet," says the memorial, word for word; "we did not require these discussions before the war, neither with Austria nor with England—Bismarck had simply offered us a positive alliance." The treaty of Berlin had but created two evils for Russia—the division of Bulgaria and the declaration of Batum as a free port. All other disadvantages had their origin in San Stefano, where an impossible convention was drawn up on paper. These interesting recollections show that the war of 1877 was begun as imprudently by Gortchakoff as the deliberations in Berlin were held with absolute timidity and with a sense of disappointment by his plenipotentiaries. They confirm once more that Bismarck was ready to help before the war, but that Gortchakoff did not respond; and it is well-known that Bismarck, nevertheless, remained staunch, in his readiness to help, by supporting all Russia's

claims. Gortchakoff's vanity was to a great extent to blame for this headlong rushing into war; but the primary motive power lay not in the old chancellor but in the number of young men who imagined this war to be necessary in order to acquire for themselves a position amongst the people and influence with the Government. To win their recognition, to restore his own shaky reputation in Europe, that is to say, to satisfy his own boundless vanity, this was the real motive of Gortchakoff, which happened to coincide with the aims of the Court circle. The Servian rebellion, which was the prelude to the war, had not been stirred up so much by official Russia as by the emissaries of Panslavism; they were the people who had already fought as volunteers under the leadership of the Russian general, Tschernajew. These fanatic Philo-Slavs carried away the Czar's *entourage*, and finally the Czar himself also; and Gortchakoff then only tried to make as much capital as possible for himself out of the campaign. When in Berlin the final award turned out somewhat meagre, when in the beginning the unlucky turn of affairs produced grave signs of dissatisfaction in the army, then these Philo-Slavs sought to lay their own guilt at the door of Bismarck and of Germany. Calumny and instigations began and were as successful with the people accustomed to believe in German faithlessness as with Alexander, who was no longer able to withstand the redoubled reproaches of having sacrificed Russian interests to his predilection for Germany. Moreover, the knowledge that he was not wholly guiltless may have weakened his will, inasmuch as his troops had turned back on reaching the gates of Constantinople. Gortchakoff joined in ringing the alarm bell busily, and finally Alexander was almost driven into a more thoughtless war than even that with Turkey had been. The consequence was the forming of the Triple Alliance.

Now the executive of the National party had again what it required, namely, an enemy against whom to excite the Russian people. This enemy was the German,

and as one could not harm him by a war in Germany, the onslaught against everything German in general, and against the German subjects of Russia in particular, became more fierce than ever. The destruction of the old valuable culture in the Baltic Provinces was continued apace. But even this trial field did not suffice. A national campaign, begun in former days against the Small Russians (a tribe of about seven or eight millions with a language and literature of their own), was taken up once more; that against the Caucasian people also; then the German settlements in the south were threatened. And when at last, under Alexander III., the goal was all but reached—when the highly-cultured Finland, against which no hand had so far been raised, protected by this ruler alone, was alone left unmolested, no time was lost after the new accession to denounce as dangerous to the State the peculiarities of this simple people also. And now the national fists are pounding away at Finland, true to the programme, after which they worked, first against the Revolutionary Poles and then against the most unrevolutionary of the other inhabitants of the great Russian Empire.

Events might perhaps have taken another turn if the hopes for liberal changes in the Constitution, such as were cherished in many circles towards the end of the reign of Alexander II., had been fulfilled. Young Russia's thirst for activity would not then perhaps have required quenching by the crushing of Poles, Turks, Germans, Small Russians, Caucasians, Finns, but would have found a better, a more fruitful and nobler sphere of action in the fields of its own country, which were in dire need of an administrative hand, and for the supposed good of which all these evil enemies had been fought for the last forty years. These plans for a change in the Constitution—for even absolute monarchism is in itself a Constitution—were on the point of being realised when Alexander II. was assassinated. Never has a crime been avenged more completely upon the criminal, and unfortunately also upon the whole nation, than has been this deed upon the mass of

those from whose midst the murderous hands were lifted.

A reactionary, and certainly not a liberal system was sympathetic to the character of the new monarch, and it is astounding with what ease the latest public opinion managed to adapt itself to this character. In a short time the longing for freedom was as though swept out of the rooms of the Russian mansion. The people threw themselves upon Nihilists, became zealously orthodox, they did their best not to lose all influence by opposing the will of the Czar and of Pobedonoszhev, and scarcely had a few years passed when public opinion swore by three things only—absolute autocracy, absolute religious orthodoxy, absolute Russian (National) Government. No one wished to hear anything more of rights or institutions which would be independent of these three powers, nothing of extension of the reforms of Alexander II, nothing of freedom of provincial life, of academical life, of religious life. In the name of these three powers all the corners of the Empire were searched for enemies and suspicious people, and, of course, what was required was found. The struggle against foreign tongues, foreign justice and culture continued unabated; side by side with it that against the Stundists and other sects, against Catholics and Protestants; finally also against schools and provincial "states." Old Russia had become once more completely subject to the officialism of the State, and at the death of Alexander III. this officialism was again as mighty as it ever had been; yea, it became very soon more absolute in power than the Crown.

If one then inquires what has been done for culture during the hundred years following the death of Paul I., one is forced to confess, in the words of Alexander I.: "Like a hundredweight this question must lie upon the breast of him who takes upon himself the responsibility of a nation's welfare." An enormous army of officials had been created, an extraordinary amount of paper had been filled with writing, laws and ordinances without number had been invented, a hundred commissions had

laboured without ceasing, but when the addition of the long account is made it is, on the whole, a labour which the Russian would illustrate by the saying "to pour from the empty into the void." Civilisation had been aimed at, not culture, forms not substance. The Russian sits down at a table laden with dishes choicer than Paris herself could produce, and feels far superior to Paris; he drives about in a carriage smarter than those seen in England, and imagines himself to have advanced far beyond England; he counts millions of soldiers and billions of roubles, and imagines Russia to be the leader in the affairs of the world. Her sway extends even unto the Pacific Ocean, and he imagines the ruler's duties to have been fulfilled. But, if we look more closely? The dishes, the wines, the carriages are French or English; the bad roads, the miserable villages, the disorder, the injustice, the ignorance, the want of culture—all these are hidden perhaps by outward ornamentation, but are for all that not radically changed. The following chapters will show how far this assertion is justified.

## CHAPTER III

### FINANCES

SOUND finances have at all times been the distinguishing feature of a well-organised State. But the part they have played in the life of the State has not always been of equal importance. As there was a time in which the individual required but little money because his needs were mostly or entirely satisfied by the simple means of subsistence and of enjoyment obtained by his own labour or by barter, so there has been a time of barter in the life of the State. During the centuries in which patrimonial justice, tithe and socage were in existence the ruler required but little ready money for State purposes, and what he realised he mostly spent upon himself and his Court, as did the nobleman in his castle. Intercourse between nation and nation, trade and the monetary systems of the various peoples, brought finances more and more to the fore, and the greater the importance of money to the town inhabitant and to the villager, the more it became necessary for the ruler to have this means of power at his disposal. A standing army, courts of justice, public administration, all these had to be paid for, and for this purpose, apart from the old duties, all sorts of taxes had to be introduced, which went on increasing with the growing circulation of money amongst the inhabitants and with the increasing need of it by the Government.

In Old Russia the Grand Dukes of Moscow lived like landed proprietors upon their estates. What they raised by the taxation of all sorts of goods, or gained by great trade monopolies and by manufactures, went into

their own pockets and formed their private income, in which the people had very little share or part. Under Peter I., with the introduction of European customs, the demand for money began to grow apace, and it is only since then that we can speak of Russian State finances. Peter himself, however, still traded principally in natural products with men and produce of the land, which he employed mercilessly for his policy of conquest, but also, according to his own light, for internal innovations and changes. His Budget only consisted of 3, and afterwards of 10 millions ; but, on the other hand, he used so much material in men for his wars, for his building enterprises, and in his civilising rage against high and low, that between 1678 and 1710 the number of "fenced-in dwellings" (Hofe), that is to say, of tax-paying dwellings, had decreased by 20 per cent.,<sup>1</sup> and a fifth part of the population had been annihilated or driven out of the country by Peter's civilising barter. The more his successors strengthened their relations with Europe, the more they Europeanised themselves and their Court outwardly, the more money did they require, the more did duties and taxes increase, and the Empress, who boasted of the highest degree of culture, Catherine the Divine, had such refined European tastes that she considered herself justified in spending upon the purchase of a collection of cameos 7 millions out of a Budget consisting of about 65 million roubles. Money was required for the Court and the army, but the country itself, and the people, saw little of it. In the reign of Anna, in the year 1734, the cost of administrating all the provinces of the Empire, which extended from Riga to the Pacific Ocean, only amounted to about 181,000 roubles. In the interior the old state of exchange and barter was and remained prevalent far into the nineteenth century. Financial matters generally and the Budget were not regulated by internal demands but by external intercourse, namely, by the ever-increasing trade relations at the close of the

<sup>1</sup> Miliukow, *Outlines of Russian History of Civilisation*, pt. i. p. 26.

eighteenth century and by the simultaneously beginning indebtedness of the State.

The trade in natural products remained long afterwards the prevailing form in private economic life; it came to an end only in consequence of the abolition of serfdom in the year 1861 and through the subsequent growth of town industries; yea, even to-day it has not completely disappeared in the heart of the country, in the *gouvernements* of Great Russia, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter. The State had far outstepped the people in its financial system. Until the year 1861 about 95 per cent. of the population lived in the country on the produce of the soil and by their home industries alone; manufactures, especially foreign ones, were only required by the Court, the army, the navy, the few rich people in town and country, and by the alien peoples of the conquered provinces on the Western Frontier. The export of raw material was quite sufficient in times of peace for the wants of these consumers, to bring the required amount of precious metal into the country and to produce a surplus balance in commerce. Unfortunately there were always more years of war than of peace, for which reason the State expenditure always overturned the favourable balance of trade and entirely cleared the country of precious metal. Thus it has been for the last 200 years. After the chaotic times of Peter I. the clever Minister Ostermann had put a check upon expenditure; commerce beyond the seas flourished in his days, but the entire commercial turnover amounted to 8 million roubles only in the year 1742.<sup>1</sup> It rose to 21 million roubles in the year of the accession of Catherine II., and to 109½ millions in the year of her death, 1796; but it was in this glorious reign that, despite an ever-increasing favourable balance of trade, assignation banks were founded in the year 1769 in St Petersburg and Moscow, and began to operate with issues of loans and paper money, which certainly rectified to a certain extent the

<sup>1</sup> Storch, *Hist. Statist. Picture of the Russian Empire*, supplement to part 5/6/7.

existing scarcity of money, but did not prevent (considering the continual wars and constant extravagance) almost all bullion from leaving the country and the exchange from becoming very unfavourable. For the year 1794 the revenue of the State was estimated at 68,750,000 roubles, but out of this an army of 593,000 men had to be maintained,<sup>1</sup> together with other useless appurtenances and functionaries, and so it is not to be wondered at that only copper money remained in the country, which had to be exchanged for silver at a loss of 80 per cent. According to other statistics,<sup>2</sup> in the year of Catherine's death, 1796, the agio of the "Assignats" of the State Bank, founded by her, stood at 39½ per cent. for silver and at 42½ per cent. for gold.<sup>3</sup> Scarcely was this glorious reign ended when, in the following year, the silver exchange fell to 24½ per cent., that of gold to 28 per cent., and the balance of trade reached 21·7 millions. This shows that the material conditions of the country under the successor of Catherine, Paul I., improved as much as they did under Catherine I. and Peter II., the equally inglorious successors of the Great Peter.

Soon there came again a time of glory and of victories, with material misery in their train. The Napoleonic wars and the consequent world policy of Alexander I. raised the National Debt to more than 1000 million roubles.<sup>4</sup> The expenditure on the army rose in the year 1816, that is to say after the close of the wars against France and Turkey, to upwards of 234 millions. On the other hand trade went on increasing favourably, with a surplus of 32 millions in the year 1817, and the State Budget showed, even in 1816, 414½ million roubles in revenue, though it must be confessed in depreciated paper money, for its relation to metal still continued

<sup>1</sup> According to accounts by Tarrach and Tautentien from Warsaw, May and September 1795, *Royal Pruss. Secret State Archives.*

<sup>2</sup> Storch.

<sup>3</sup> According to a table compiled by Count Speranski the assignat rouble stood, in 1796, at 70½ silver kopecks.

<sup>4</sup> Bernhardt, *Russian History*, iii. p. 143.

unfavourable. The paper rouble stood to the silver rouble, until the year 1818, as 4 to 1, that is to say, much lower than in the days of Catherine, which is explained by the considerably increased National Debt. This debt consisted to a great extent of a floating bank loan, and only to a small degree (102 million Dutch ducats) in foreign loans, and would therefore not have been a particularly heavy burden had it had a proportionate bullion reserve as its basis. This was, however, not the case, and the paper rouble could therefore not attain to any proper value on account of the continual influx of foreign metal produced by the flourishing export trade. The foreign gold and silver coin did not only take the place of the paper money, but also of the Russian coin, and the struggle with this foreign money played the chief part in the debates which, under Cankrin, led to the reforms of 1839. The foreign metal, brought into the country by a continual favourable balance of trade, made it easier for the Deposit Bank founded by this Minister to attract the necessary silver, on the basis of which, in the place of the old paper money, the new paper rouble was founded. With this new paper some order gradually came into the finances, which, however, could not be safeguarded against continual great fluctuations, which greatly hampered commerce. Credit began to improve, the bank-note rose in the exchange, but scarcely had it reached par when, in 1853, the Crimean War broke out and threw the exchange far back again. The national credit, however, suffered little by this. It is true the balance of trade grew more unfavourable, when more and more raw produce from over the seas was thrown upon the European market. From the beginning of the "fifties" Australian wool had made its appearance as a competitor, and still earlier American cotton had reduced the price of the Russian article; later on, towards the end of the "sixties," American grain commenced its victorious campaign in the European markets. In order to cover the deficit in the exports, higher protective duties were placed upon imports. Meanwhile the Budget increased, the State

punctually paid its interest, and confidence in the financial future of the country grew apace, especially abroad.

This confidence of the monied States was taken advantage of freely. Then came the reforms of 1861-1864, followed by the founding of agrarian banks and the importation of machinery of all kinds, the energetic construction of railways, the beginnings of industrial activity, and lastly the war of 1877. For all these great sums were required, and within twenty-five years Russia obtained, by foreign loans, 1500 millions of gold but yet had, in the year 1887, including the yield of the Siberian gold mines, only 281 millions in the Exchequer. With these gold loans the deficit on the foreign liabilities which began to make its appearance with the depreciation of the paper rouble and the consequent demand for a higher rate of interest, had to be made good. With these loans also the deficits which regularly appeared in the Budget were covered. Then, in the year 1887, Wyschnegradski became Financial Minister. With him there dawned a new era, distinguished by the ruthlessness with which the people were bled for fiscal ends, an era which seems to have reached its culminating point to-day.

Before 1860 the enormous distances were in themselves sufficient to give any administration a character for slowness. To bring in an innovation throughout the whole Empire, and still more to execute it properly, was an especially difficult matter for a department such as the Treasury, which is obliged, more than any other, to govern according to fixed rules. Every new tax had to be levied even unto the Asiatic Frontier, and its collection had to be supervised. As long as there were no railways it was very difficult for the Minister to know in how far those distant districts were capable of taxation, but even more difficult to find out how honestly or how rapaciously his officials in Astrakhan, Odessa, or Pensa set to work. No other branch of administration has so many temptations for the dishonest official and requires, in consequence, so much the unremitting watchfulness of its chiefs. The extension of the network of railways

began in the "sixties." The principal lines were already finished in the "eighties." Thus the country entered upon an era of entirely new financial administration. Railways and telegraphs enable the Minister of to-day to make fiscal innovations with far greater rapidity, to observe their effects, to make his influence felt continually, and to protect his coffers from thieving hands, even where fifty years ago the glance of an inspector scarcely ever penetrated. The entire machinery has become more reliable and more easy of management. It is therefore not to be wondered at that a Financial Minister of the year 1860 administered affairs differently from one of the year 1890, and one cannot ascribe the new era entirely to the merits of the respective Ministers. The technique of administration has attained a state of perfection which would have been impossible fifty years ago. Nowadays it is possible for Ministers to follow the economic development of the nation step by step. This possibility had to be used in the interests of finance, and it was so used. Without this alteration in the technical machinery the enormous sums with which the State operates to-day could not have been put into circulation. But it is equally true that the very capacity of the machine involved the danger of its wrong usage, of fiscal interests being followed with a zeal which lost sight of the interests of general prosperity. That this has been the case in the present era has to-day been held up as a reproach to Mons. Witte from various competent quarters.<sup>1</sup>

When the Financial Minister, Wyschnegradski, took office in the year 1877 he found a National Debt of 4500 million roubles, which required every year for its interest and sinking fund 262 millions; in the Exchequer he found 281 millions of gold. The debt had been accumulated through loans contracted mostly abroad, whither much gold flowed every year for payments of interest and amortisation, and produced an unfavourable influence upon the rate of exchange of the paper rouble.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Schwanebach, *Money Reforms and National Economy*. St Petersburg, 1901 (Russian).

During this period of the growth of the Russian National Debt, *i.e.*, from the days of the "sixties," gold had obtained in Europe and in America a preponderant position. Germany had gone over to an absolute gold standard, the Latin Union had been formed in the United States, in Austria, in Italy, in fact, everywhere gold had become more and more the basis of finance. The more Russia entered into economic relations with European countries the more she required foreign manufactures, the more she needed gold. This need increased with every increase in the foreign loan, which hitherto had been contracted in order to acquire gold. Whereas from the year 1862 to that of 1887 the debt had increased by about 1000 millions the balance yet remained unsatisfactory: 50 to 60 millions more of gold than came into the country flowed away every year, for Russia's production of gold in those days only yielded about 20 millions per annum. It is true, since 1881, the export exceeded the import by 60 per cent. after the raising of the tariff, but this was not even sufficient to cover the interest on the foreign loans, so that she had constantly to resort to new loans in order to meet her liabilities. Wyschnegradski with his strong grasp brought the rolling wagon in its downward course to a standstill. Above all he tightened the screw of taxation; within three years 50 million roubles more were obtained by taxation. Moreover, within two years 16 million roubles of arrears in taxes were collected, and even then these collections were the important factors they have remained ever since. By the collection of taxes the Minister forced the Russian peasant to sell his corn in the autumn as quickly as possible. This contributed to the acceleration and to the increase of export. It has been estimated that whereas from 1882 to 1886 of the actual harvest 15 per cent. were exported annually, this had increased from 1887 to 1891 to 22 per cent. Corn had played the principal part in the export for a long time, but it was only by the impetus given by Wyschnegradski that it rose to the important position it has held ever since. If the peasant was obliged by

the tax-collector to sell quickly, the landed proprietor in his turn was tempted to the same course, to which he would have been driven in any case by the rapidly-growing mortgage upon his estates and by his lack of ready money. The Minister secured to himself the regulation of the railway tariffs; he introduced a special tariff for corn and thus drew it, by cheap freights, from the granaries of the most distant estates into the export ports. He created, so says Schwanebach, a premium upon the export of corn and reaped success from it. With equal success he checked the imports, by increasing, in the year 1887, the duty upon coal, iron, tea and other necessary imports, by introducing, in the year 1890, a general rise of 20 per cent. upon imports, and by imposing, in 1891, upon many manufactures an almost prohibitive duty. What he obtained by these measures was, that during the first five years of his office, in contradistinction to the former five years, the export of corn rose from 312 million poods yearly to 442 million poods, and that the balance of trade, which from the year 1867 had been passive and had only become active since the end of the "seventies," increased from 66 million to 307 million roubles. If the former efflux of gold was changed into an influx, the conversion of the foreign gold loans into paper loans served the same end. By these conversions the term for redemptions was extended and the quotations were lowered. The yearly interest upon the foreign loans decreased by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles, but the debt itself increased from 796 to 941 million gold roubles.

In former days the attempt had been made to counteract the strong fluctuations in the rates of exchange by the purchase of bank-notes in Berlin, which was a very costly method. Wyschnegradski used the gold reserve in speculations upon the fluctuations on the Bourse, in favour of the Exchequer, and is said to have thus contributed to the increase of the gold reserve.<sup>1</sup> Whilst trying in this way to use the revenue of the State he reduced the ex-  
*win, Russia's Financial Policy and the Tasks of the Future.*

penditure considerably ; of the more than 50 additional millions obtained by the collection of duties and taxes, he returned nothing to the country, the expenditure in the Budget only slightly increasing.

The financial success of Wyschnegradski was brilliant. The chronic deficits disappeared ; and on the contrary a yearly surplus of 41·4 million roubles appeared. This surplus enabled the Minister to pay the interest on the State loans without any difficulty, but also to obtain gold from abroad by the purchase of bonds, and to add it to the bullion reserve. During his term of office, from 1887 to 1893, the gold reserve had increased rapidly from 281½ millions to 581·6 million roubles of the old currency, or 782·8 millions of the new (1889). The means by which he drew these 300 millions of gold into the coffers of the State were increased taxation, and thus an increased revenue, which exceeded the Budget estimates and attained more and more importance in the ministerial reports and estimates as so-called "cash in hand." This reserve of gold made its way to a great extent into the cellars of the State Bank, which gave paper notes in exchange. Thus, contrary to the original purpose and intent of this institution, the exchange business suffered. The bullion reserve of the bank was doubled between the years 1888 and 1893, but at the same time loan and discount business were reduced by one half. The business of the bank began to take a downward course, and from being an institution existing for the welfare of economic life, it became the financial tool of the Minister, which it has remained ever since after having taken up once more, on a great scale, its activity as a credit institution in the domains of commerce and industry.

This financial triumph of Wyschnegradski was arrested, as by a stumbling stone, by the year 1891 with its extensive failure of crops. The State had to sacrifice 162 millions in order to help the starving people, and the export fell considerably in the year 1892. However, the sound finances introduced by

Wyschnegradski could bear those deficits far more easily than would have been the case formerly. Even in the year 1893 the upward movement of export was considerable and the Budget closed, at the resignation of Wyschnegradski, with a large gold reserve. The National Debt had only increased during these six years by 229 million roubles, and the interest on the same had even decreased by 20·7 millions, in consequence of the conversions into lower securities.

When the Secretary of State, Witte, took over the Ministry he found the finances in a sound condition, but threatened by dangers from two sides; on the one hand by the National Debt, on the other by the limited capacity for taxation. It seemed possible that some day there would not enter, figuratively speaking, as much through one door of the house as would have to leave by the other. However energetically Wyschnegradski had avoided increasing the National Debt by new loans, it had nevertheless reached dangerous proportions during the preceding period, through the construction of railways and other heavy expenditure. In the "seventies" a heavy loan had been contracted every year. The National Debt amounted in 1893 to 4571 millions (of the currency of 1898); the interest for this sum amounted to 241½ millions. Under Wyschnegradski the National Debt had only increased by 229 millions. But a great part of the loan had been taken up abroad, and the interest upon it had to be paid in gold; the ever-increasing demand for machinery and other manufactures which Russian industries could not produce had also to be paid for in gold. If the export, which had received a strong check by the failure of the harvest in 1891, did not bring back this gold, the gold reserve could no longer hold out, and the financial carriage would again take its former dangerous course towards the abyss. At the same time the effects of the strong impetus given by Wyschnegradski to the export of corn became apparent as early as 1893. Behind the peasant stood the tax-collector with the knout; in

front of him and of the great landed proprietors the man with the temptingly cheap differential tariffs. Matters had come to such a pitch that America sent a ship with corn as a present for the starving people to St Petersburg. The worst of it was that the collection of taxes became more and more difficult, and that the arrears began to increase by leaps and bounds. In forty-six *gouvernements* of Russia the arrears of the peasants amounted, in the year 1893, to 119½ million roubles, and of these 110 millions fell to the share of the Central and Eastern, the Old Russian and the two New Russian Provinces, that is to say, to the fruitful Black Earth districts. The arrears exceeded, in spite of the rigorous collections, the yearly estimate of taxes in the Budget by double and even treble the amount. This was an ominous sign of the decreasing capacity for taxation of the country population, that is to say, of more than 90 per cent. of the population of these districts, who were the chief producers in the country.

To a certain extent indebtedness, and especially indebtedness abroad, had always been recognised as a bad condition for the State to be in; even Cankrin had said that only in the case of extreme necessity must the State resort to foreign loans.<sup>1</sup> But if the agricultural capacity for production should decline further, then the chief source of export and of taxation threatened to fail; or if it were to maintain its former position, or even to rise beyond it, then the cruel collections must be continued. This source did not give much promise of furnishing the means of leading the country onward in the road of European development, upon which it had entered, socially since 1861 and economically since the building of the chief railway lines. If the capacity for taxation was to be safeguarded the productive power must be increased and economical development be furthered with the country's own means.

<sup>1</sup> Compare A. Schmidt, *Russian Finances during the Financial Administration of Count Cankrin, from 1823-1844*. St Petersburg, 1872, p. 21.

The intention was to do the latter—to raise Russia to the level of other European States ; for, in spite of her having been for so long a first-class Power, she had been dependent upon Europe as regards culture. This had to be done speedily, immediately, for the self-consciousness of the nation would no longer brook delay. Perhaps these tendencies made it the more easy for Witte to decide which road to take. Perhaps he considered that it would require years to raise the productiveness of agriculture, by means of State aid, so as to make new loans unnecessary ; that further an agrarian reform was not alone the business of the financial Minister, but required the co-operation of other members of the Government, who for the present did not consider such a reform either practicable or even useful. Every agrarian reform must, if it is to be far-reaching, tackle such questions as communal ownership of land systems of taxation, yea, even village schools and provincial autonomy, questions which would have been answered in very different ways by the colleagues of the Minister. Trusting to a natural development of things the Minister could continue in the course entered upon by his predecessor, renouncing once for all any great agrarian reform ; he could increase the gold reserve and fix the exchange until he was in a position to proceed with the conversion of bank-notes into coin which had been suspended for some time past. He could endeavour to pay off the foreign debt gradually and thus stop the continual exit of gold. Even if good harvests and heavy exports did not equal the import of manufactures, which, since they were only produced to a small extent in the country, had to be imported from abroad—a greater influx of foreign goods, connected as it is with an increasing flow of gold abroad, always stands in exact proportion to the progressive development of the country—and after all there were 581½ millions of gold in the cellars, and moreover exports began to rally once more. The road towards gradual improvement in the prosperity of the people and to gradual repayment of foreign debts threatened to be very long. Witte credited

himself with the capacity of reaching, by a short cut, the principal goals—the re-establishment of the former exchange and the economical independence of the Empire. If Wyschnegradski had shown a strong hand he had yet lagged far behind as regards the inconsiderate mode of procedure, which now became apparent on all sides. Even during the first year the innovations crowded one another. The exchange was put on a firm footing, but by the purchase and sale of bills payable in gold and no longer raised by the purchase of paper roubles, the taxes were increased by about 70 millions a year. Then the tariff war with Germany, which had broken out in consequence of the former's excessive raising of the tariff, was brought to a close by a treaty of commerce which reduced the duties. The conversion of loans (according to former methods, at any rate) ceased, but new loans were contracted in rapid succession year by year.

If Wyschnegradski had pursued fiscal interests without consideration for the economical capacity of the country, by the regulation of values and the securing of the Budget, Witte advanced in this direction far more energetically. Above all he assumed the position of absolute master in financial matters. Not only the National Bank but all private banks were put under his own immediate supervision and guidance. He secured to himself the right to dismiss directors and brokers, to close banks and businesses of exchange; he prohibited, under penalty, all speculation in gold values, yea, he forced the private banks to leave all business in bills with abroad to the National Bank for a time, and the latter was obliged, according to the new statute of 1894, to serve henceforth not so much commerce as the industries and the Bourse operations of the Minister. At the same time Witte began further to increase the amount of gold reserve. If his predecessor had aimed straightway at a gold standard, Witte seems to have hesitated at first, until the continual increase of the unused gold in the cellars drove him to dare this step. For it was a daring enterprise for him, early in 1895 to

commence to exchange bank-notes for gold, even before the passing of the respective law, when the gold reserve had risen to 629·7 million roubles, or 2500 million francs. If the balance of trade should become unfavourable once more, then of necessity the exchange would also become unfavourable, and the precious metal, collected with such great sacrifice, would have flowed back abroad. The gold standard could, and can, only maintain itself upon the assumption that gold remains in the country by a continual surplus of trade. A country such as England can afford to see without concern large sums leaving her shores by export trade, because she receives back more than these in the shape of dividends from foreign States and returns on her private loans and industrial undertakings scattered all over the globe. In the year 1899 Great Britain's trade deficit, including that of the Colonies, amounted to over 3000 million marks, but the value of her foreign securities is estimated at 4000 million marks, or about 2000 million roubles. Russia has no such expectations, no foreign or national private loans, nor any industrial undertakings abroad from which she could derive profit. Of her own industries a large share of the profit flowed every year, in the shape of interest and dividends, to foreign creditors and shareholders. The national payments, the "gold tribute" as it is called in Russia, as well as the profit and interest due to private foreign creditors, must be raised entirely (apart from the gold obtained from the Siberian mines) by the surplus in trade if a gold standard is to be maintained. If trade is not capable of producing this surplus the gold reserve may for a time be supplemented by loans or other operations abroad, in the expectation that the balance of trade will rise later and cover once more the costs of such operations. However, this can only be a temporary expedient and a makeshift, and whoever employs this means must be actuated by great confidence in the future taxable capabilities of the country. Such confidence Monsieur Witte lacked in "With firm faith," so he says in his Budget

report of 1898, "in the continued development and augmentation of the productive powers of Russia" he set to work.

Export had increased again after the decrease of 1892, but in consequence of the commercial treaty with Germany, by which the duties were lowered considerably, and in consequence of the simultaneously increasing demand for foreign manufactures required for the construction of railways and for industrial undertakings, the import grew so rapidly that the assets of trade, which had amounted between 1887 and 1892 to more than 300 million roubles each year, amounted to only 143 millions during the period from 1893 to 1898, and actually sank within one year, 1896 to 99.3 million roubles. Since, in 1893 the interest upon the foreign loans required every year about 100 millions in gold, the surplus obtained from the gold mines could not be large enough to secure the gold reserve or to increase it. More visionary still was the expectation to obtain from the ordinary revenue the means for furthering national industries by great national credits, so as to be independent of foreign countries. The Minister had made it his task to create industries in this vast and entirely undeveloped country which were to cover the yearly exit of many millions for rails and rolling stock, for agricultural and industrial machinery, for chemicals and many other necessaries; industries which were to supply the peasant with labour, the *entrepreneur* with an income, which were to accelerate the accumulation of capital and provide the State with new sources of revenue. For this purpose the Minister required money, and money was, moreover, necessary to convert the railways into State undertakings, to firmly establish the gold standard, to help the impoverished Russian nobility and the peasants—in short, to pursue a financial policy with the sovereign omnipotence which we have all been admiring since Monsieur Witte forsook, without a forethought, the careful reserve of Wyschnegradski and proceeded to pile up new liabilities.

The political *rapprochement* with France had opened

to him her rich money market. It was France who had before taken over the greater part of the Russian National Debt and thus delivered Germany of the burden which threatened German policy. Now she became Russia's banker, and Germany would do well to leave this business entirely to the French. Political friendship does not generally become the more cordial by being combined with monetary obligations. It is difficult to maintain a free hand in politics towards a State to which one has handed over the greater part of one's national property, whether in the shape of bonds or of private investments. Any war into which Russia should be drawn to-day would become an equally great source of anxiety to France. And if, as it is affirmed, Franco-Belgian money is invested in Russian iron and steel works to the amount of 1650 million francs, this means a very considerable increase of the power which the Russian Minister of Finance already possesses in French politics. As in the private life of the individual, so is it in the life of a State : the feelings of Russia towards a country to which she owes between 8000 and 9000 millions, in various forms, are not those of gratitude alone. And one need only study the Budget reports of Monsieur Witte to recognise that he deals with this foreign money more as a bold speculator than as a careful investor. He declares openly that this foreign capital is to give an impetus to Russia's productive power, and that beyond this he cares very little what becomes of it. Russia is not landed property which can be seized and sold by auction on account of mortgage debt. There does not exist a Court of Bankruptcy for insolvent States. If Russia should some day be unable to raise the interest and the sums necessary for amortisation upon the sixty thousand versts of railway lines which she has built, then it would be found difficult to bring this pledge under the auctioneer's hammer ; it is equally as difficult to make the financial Minister responsible for having raised the faith of foreign capitalists in a fairy-like, brilliant development of Russia's resources. Russian indebtedness is no

danger to Germany, rather the reverse, but she will be well to beware of it.

From the time that Monsieur Witte has taken office not a year has passed by without the raising of at least one foreign loan, and on the 1st January 1900 Monsieur Witte had increased the National Debt by 1579 million roubles; it amounted to 6150 million roubles and required an annual expenditure of 292 millions on interest and amortisation. He further commenced to sell on a large scale Russian securities, especially gold bonds such as railway debentures and notes of hand of the Agrarian Bank of the Nobility. Within six years  $\frac{9}{10}$  of such securities went across the frontier, and by the year 1900 about 3500 million roubles of Russian gold bonds were to be found abroad, and required for their yearly interest, payable in gold, 140 million roubles. In return for these bonds, however, gold had come into the country. In Russia itself only the loans upon the rouble of the new currency had remained. Of such loans more than 4000 millions were still in the country itself; of the 4 per cent. Rente there were in the country, on 1st January 1899, about 1503 millions.<sup>1</sup> A third source of revenue was opened up since 1895 by the fast-developing industries, which the Minister encouraged in every way. From the wealthy countries in the West, gold flowed in for investment in all sorts of industrial undertakings, sums which have been estimated to average at the lowest 100 million roubles per annum.

Whereas the surplus of the foreign trade did not suffice to pay the yearly "gold tribute," i.e., the interest and amortisation on the National Debt abroad, whereas the Siberian mine yielded from 1893 to 1898 altogether only 297 million roubles in gold, the gold treasure of the State increased during this period by 637 $\frac{1}{2}$  millions, and it had reached, on the 1st January 1897, no less than 1247 millions. To have such an amount of gold in the cellars, and to keep at the same time to the old silver currency, which in reality was

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chancellery of Credit.

only a paper currency, had no sense ; this dead capital had to be made productive somehow, and at last it was decided to adopt a gold currency. Based upon the law of the 3rd January 1897, a beginning was made by exchanging the paper money at a fixed rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roubles for the gold rouble, and there seemed to be great hurry to flood the country with bullion. The people were astounded ; the present generation had never, the very old people only as a curiosity, seen the Russian "Imperial," and now the gold was forced upon everyone by the Treasury. Monsieur Witte was taken for a financial artist, almost for a conjurer. But there was very little art, and even less conjuring needed to scatter gold broadcast, as long as foreign countries still continued to take up new, or even old, Russian securities, and as long as the revenue of the State could be maintained at a uniformly high level by the help of oppressive taxation and other means. On 1st January 1899 there were of gold in the Exchequer, 1420.1 millions ; of treasury-gold in the banks abroad, 1799 millions, *i.e.*, altogether a sum of about 1600 million roubles in gold at the new value. Within ten years Russia had reached the financial level of Western European States ; financially she had become a first-class Power, she had broken with the old dependence upon the quotations of the Berlin and other Bourses, which was neither consistent with her political position nor with her supposititious wealth.

So it seemed. Yet the fact could not remain concealed that this apparent abundance of gold consisted mostly of foreign loans, that the debts which had been contracted had also to be repaid, as well as the interest upon them, that it was possible for the gold rouble to flow back whence it had come should the productive strength of the people not be able to keep firm hold upon it. From henceforth the whole care of the Minister was to prevent such an efflux of the gold abroad. Production must be increased at all cost. Up to 90 per cent. of the population were engaged in agricultural pursuits ; 90 per cent. of all exports

consisted of raw materials, and 85 per cent. of all exports in 1893 consisted merely in agricultural products. Even as late as 1898 the Minister said in a speech that agriculture produced hardly any capital which could be drawn upon for industrial purposes. Yet capital to a large amount was necessary in order to make the country industrially independent of foreign countries, which, at this very time, were advancing with great strides in this direction. Of the natural wealth required for this purpose, especially coal, paraffin, iron, there was no lack in the country. Now these treasures were to be brought to the light of day.

In 1894 Government securities to the value of about 1000 millions, held in the country, were converted. The 5 per cent. loans were called in and a 4 per cent. "Rente" issued in exchange. If the immediate gain to the Treasury in interest was not great, the effect of this operation was bound to become very important in a country where money is so scarce, and where the scale of private interest reaches about 10 per cent. per annum. With the new 4 per cent. Rente the 5 per cent., and later also the 4 per cent., gold loans were taken out of the country and sold abroad.  $\frac{5}{6}$ ths of the internal National Debt was changed into 4 per cent. Rente. The capital which became available flowed into industrial investments, which promised a higher interest, and simultaneously into Bourse speculations, which developed on parallel lines with the multiplication of industrial joint-stock companies. The Minister obtained what he desired; he drove the existing capital of the country by force into industrial enterprises and made a profit for the Treasury as well.

The capital of the State was spent upon industrial speculations with a lavish hand. Numerous banks were founded and supported by Government; through them the money flowed into the many new enterprises which started up everywhere. Technical and commercial schools were founded by the State and subsidised. Foreign capital was smitten by the fever for industrial enterprises, which now ran its course through the peaceful Russian plains after having raged before in

Central Europe. From 1894 to 1899 no less than 927 joint-stock companies, with a nominal capital<sup>1</sup> of 1420½ million roubles, were given concession; of these 151 were foreign syndicates. At the head of all these there strode the Government with the construction of new railways, of men-of-war, and with the subsidising of steamship lines, whereby the production of iron, and the iron industry itself, grew in strength, and called into life in their train a number of industrial undertakings and factories.

If the administration of Wyschnegradski had borne a mercantile character, Monsieur Witte governed by monopolies. The railways became State property to a great extent, and during the ten years from 1892 to 1902 Monsieur Witte spent upon the extension of the State lines 2251·9 million roubles;<sup>2</sup> altogether almost 4000 million roubles, mostly foreign money, were invested in private and State railways by the year 1897.<sup>3</sup> For this purpose the Minister had increased the National Debt by the year 1890 by more than 1000 millions, and the "gold tribute" payable abroad by, roughly speaking, 40 millions per annum. On 1st January 1902, according to the Budget report for that year, the entire network of railways reached 60,000 versts, or 64,200 kms., the State railways a length of 40,000 kms., so that 24,200 kms. were in private hands. Even in 1897 the State participated in the entire State and private railway construction with 94·9 per cent. of the capital,<sup>4</sup> and this participation has meanwhile risen considerably by the great Government constructions in Asia and the purchase by the State of the Moscow-Archangel Railway, so that the State may be looked upon as the constructor of the entire network of railways in the country. The costs of construction have not been too high, even if the particularly favourable conditions in

<sup>1</sup> Schoenbach estimates the actual capital at 560-600 millions.

<sup>2</sup> Budget Report for 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical Review of the Railways in Russia, issued by the Ministry of Domain for the year 1900.

<sup>4</sup> *Bulletin Russe de Statistique Financière*, 1901, A, p. 7.

European Russia are taken into account. Even if one considers the network of State railways alone, which comprises 40,000 kms., and estimates its cost, according to the Budget Report of 1902, at 3551·6 million roubles, this gives on an average an expenditure of, roughly speaking, 88,790 roubles per kilometre.<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Finances<sup>2</sup> estimates the cost of construction at 81,125 roubles per verst, or 86,798 roubles per kilometre. The Ministry of Domain<sup>3</sup> estimates the cost of construction for the entire railway network at 109,500 roubles per verst, or 117,165 roubles per kilometre. And even this would not be much in comparison with other countries and in consideration of the greater weight of the rails and of the rolling stock required on account of the broader gauge. The entire costs per kilometre amounted in Prussia, in the year 1899, to 252,139 marks, and in the year 1900 to 253,854 marks.<sup>4</sup> But in this is included, as I take it, not alone the original costs of construction, as in the Russian estimates, but also those of a later date. Nevertheless there probably exists a difference of costs in favour of Russia. With reference to these the gross receipts from the State railways and ticket stamp, according to the Budget, are estimated at, roughly, 400 million roubles for 1902, which amounts to 10,000 roubles per km. on 40,000 kms. of railway line. In Prussia the gross receipts of the State railways for 1900 amounted to 45,532 marks, therefore to more than double those of Russia, the working surplus per km. in Prussia to 18,451 marks, and the working expenses therefore to 27,081 marks, that is to say, to more than the entire gross receipts in Russia, which amounted to only 23,200 marks. If in spite of this the Minister should obtain interest, or even "a small surplus," it must be confessed that hitherto one has not been accustomed to so economical,

<sup>1</sup> 1 kilometre = 1·7 miles.

<sup>2</sup> Kowalewski, *La Russie à la fin du 19<sup>me</sup> Siècle*. Paris, 1900, p. 375.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical Review of the Railways in Russia, issued by the Ministry of Domain for the year 1900.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics of the Railways of Germany for 1899-1900.

so astonishingly profitable an administration in Russia. But the Ministry of Domain estimates (it is true only for the European Russian railways) an interest on the capital of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and the Financial Ministry<sup>1</sup> even gives, for the year 1897 to 1899, an average net profit of 400 million francs (*Produit net*). The figures therefore do not tally. Nor does the matter become any clearer by comparing with it the ordinary expenses, according to the Budget estimate, of  $297\frac{1}{2}$  millions, *i.e.*, of  $7437\frac{1}{2}$  roubles per kilometre. Does one perchance work so much more cheaply in Russia than in Prussia? or should the account, whether semi or entirely official, not be trustworthy? One cannot but doubt the accuracy of these figures if one glances at the net results of the railway traffic in the preceding year. The Minister says in his Budget Report for 1902: "In the year 1900 the financial result of the participation of the Treasury in the working of the entire railway network, including the expenditure upon the Siberian Railway lines, shows a small net profit." Even this "small net profit" seems very problematical.

According to the accounts of the *State Control* the gross receipts of the State and private railways in the year 1900 amounted to 373·9 million roubles, and the expenditure to 405·6 million roubles, so that the Treasury had to cover a deficit of 31·7 million roubles. According to this the "small net profit" is converted into a not inconsiderable loss. For the year 1901 the deficit no doubt will prove far greater, considering the extension of the very costly and entirely unproductive Siberian lines. If, however, one takes up the organ of the Minister, the *Bulletin russe*<sup>2</sup> one reads as follows:—"The balance of the State railways, including the annuities paid by the private companies for the 15 years from 1886 to 1900, showed for the State a yearly loss on an average of 12·9 million roubles. It is incomprehensible in the face of these figures how the Ministerial report for 1902 can give the net profit of the State railways and the payments of private companies for

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30, 31.

1900 at 139 million roubles, since the payments of the private companies amounted, according to the *Bulletin*, to only 22 million francs, or 8½ million roubles, it is true only as a minimum," as the *Bulletin* affirms. The profits of the Russian State railways become completely illusory if one takes into consideration that since the year 1900 the Siberian-Manchurian lines have been added, the takings of which are very small but the costs of construction of which are great owing to bad construction of the line, adverse climatic conditions, and the necessity of protecting the line by military force. Yet these are the official figures of the Ministry and of the *State Control*, whereas other accounts show considerable yearly losses to the Treasury on these railways.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile new loans are being contracted and new railways being built, which the Minister declares to be a "mighty productive power." The Budget of 1902 gives as expenditure on the railways the following figures: ordinary expenditure, 398,625,050 roubles; extraordinary expenditure, 165,658,493 roubles—a total of 564,283,543 roubles—of which 170½ millions is for the construction of new railways. To this must be added large sums which are provided by private companies for railway construction. All this capital may be looked upon as having been indirectly, or directly, borrowed abroad. It has its more or less open source in loans which have been or are being contracted. Thus also for 1902 presumably a very considerable new State loan will come to light. All this shows how good Russia's credit is and how determined the Minister to make use of it. The fact is, he still believes in the productive power of the country, in spite of all the many disappointments which the last ten years have brought in their train, and in spite of the more and more burdensome "gold tribute" payable abroad. If this were a case of North America, there the land, and above all the people, would be at hand to make such enterprises productive and profitable, even if they were

<sup>1</sup> *Famished Russia*, by Lehmann and Parvus. Stuttgart, Dietz, p. 480.

created by foreign capital. But Monsieur Witte does not happen to be the Minister of the United States.

In 1895 Monsieur Witte made the attempt to turn the sale of brandy into a State monopoly. He declared in his Budget Report for 1899 that "in changing the method of collecting the Excise duty he had no intention whatever of turning it into a source of immediate increase of the Government revenue." Meanwhile, the sum of 322 millions, raised in the year 1896 by indirect taxation of spirits, has risen in the Estimates for 1901 to 488 millions, and of these, roughly, 169 millions fall to the share of the State monopoly on brandy. It is, however, true that the adoption of this monopoly has cost the State 114 million roubles, and that the estimated profit for 1901 of the monopoly trade amounts to only 38 million roubles at the most. According to the report of the "Excise Office," the profit on the monopoly for 1900 amounted to 5.2 million roubles only. But if the Minister thought, even as late as 1898, to have taken the brandy traffic into his own hands only in order to "put an end to the mismanagement of this traffic," one must at least congratulate him on his good fortune in having increased, within five years, through taxation and trade in spirits, the revenue of the Government by 166 million roubles. For 1902 the result of the Government sale of brandy, including Excise duties, is estimated at 497.4 million roubles, a sum which is all the greater considering that the year 1901 has yielded, as the Minister says in the same Budget Report, "One of the least favourable crops." In spite of this the Treasury trade in brandy has overstepped, during the first ten months of 1901, the estimate by 31½ million roubles, so that in this year of famine the State will draw more than 500 million roubles from the consumption of raw spirits. If one takes into consideration that it is principally brandy which forms the bulk of this traffic, one cannot but come to the conclusion that the profit to the Treasury is due in great part to a physical and moral deterioration of the people.

Besides the network of railways and the brandy

monopoly many other sources of income are exploited directly by the State, such as posts and telegraphs, forests, mines, crown lands, etc. All these estates, administered by the Ministry of Finance, the Board of Agriculture and the Ministry of Domain together, yielded for 1901, 40 per cent. of the ordinary revenue of the Exchequer (693·3 million roubles), and for 1902 even 57 per cent. (1030 millions). These are the figures in the Budget which chiefly serve to swell it. It is true against these receipts are set off the expenses : the Administration of Finances costs, according to the estimates of 1902, about 335·2 millions, the Ministry of Domain 435·5 millions ; together, 770·7 million roubles. The State property and State administration have, however, reached proportions to be met with in no other country in the world and which approach very nearly the ideals of State socialism.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Reichs Bank, with the issue of paper handed over to it since 1897 and the circulation of money which is centred completely in it, is entirely in the hands of the Financial Minister ; that the deposits in the State Savings Banks which exists all over the country, with a total capital of more than 700 million roubles, are invested chiefly in 4 per cent. Rentes, a fact which turns them into a sort of Floating Internal State Loan. According to a Ukase of the year 1901, no rural Communal Savings Banks may contain more than 50 roubles in cash, but must hand over the surplus to the Treasury State Banks for their safe keeping. If one takes all these circumstances into account one is confronted with a financial power wielded by the hand of the Minister which may be called almost absolute. His power is increased further by the manner in which he draws up the Budget estimates. The different items of Revenue are estimated at so low a figure that a surplus appears regularly, which is looked upon by the Minister as "cash in hand" for unforeseen. Thus he had at his disposal on 1st January 1895, 352·1 million roubles ; on 1st January 1900, 245

millions; on 1st January 1901, 123 millions; and on 1st January 1902, 240 millions. How this cash is obtained is not very clear, but for 1902 the Minister himself confesses that 150 millions of this surplus consists of newly-issued 4 per cent. Rentes.

Certainly these ought not to count as a surplus. Such manipulations as these no doubt show a good reserve for years even with failures of crops, great sums expended on Chinese wars, and on railway construction in Asia. Such surpluses give splendid colour to the picture of Russian financial life, dazzling enough for many who see in them the proof of the great and ever-growing capacity for taxation of the people.

The figures of the entire Budget appear equally dazzling. According to the statistics of the Minister, the expenditure reached 867·5 millions in the year 1889; according to the Control Report of the State 1889 millions were spent in 1900, and for the year 1902, 1,946,572,000 roubles are estimated. During the six years from 1895 to 1900 the expenditure rose by about 125 millions per annum. And this expenditure was not only covered by the apparent receipts, but even left large surpluses, without however being able to prevent the necessity of at least one foreign loan every year. Thus we have in May 1901 a loan for 435 million francs, and added to this the indirect loan by the sale of railway preference shares to the amount of 80 million marks, in spite of the remaining cash of 123 million roubles in hand on the 1st January 1901, and in spite of the assurance given by the Minister less than a year ago (Budget Report 1901) that "no loan would be required for the Budget in the ensuing year." Whether required for the Budget or for the satisfaction of other demands, to which we shall refer later on, they are loans, nevertheless, which increase the National Debt and the "gold tribute" and cast a shadow upon the splendour of the Budget.

Yet another circumstance is ominous. Since 1894, 4 per cent. Consols have been introduced, which have no yearly amortisation and are used, more

especially at home, for the exchange of paper at higher interest and with amortisation. Up to the year 1900 the Minister had already placed 2500 millions in the shape of Rentes, and of these in the country itself 1503 millions, whereby 19.2 millions of amortisation were saved every year. To draw a comparison with the French Rente would be unfair, since, although France has a debt similar to that of Russia, she possesses far more capital. As Russia has no capital at all it would seem more prudent to proceed with current amortisation than to burthen the future with the debt in favour of the present. However, the Minister seems to favour these securities particularly. In July 1901 the State Bank announced that the holders of certain railway securities and of other 4½ per cent. Government bonds should be invited to exchange these for the Rente. The meaning of this proposal seems to have been that the Treasury, as proprietor of a large number of these securities, should thus obtain a free hand to exchange them for Rente and then to sell abroad. The fact is that the credit balance has to be maintained and gold drawn into the country at all costs in order to equalise its efflux. The following Measure also aimed at this: A Ukase of the 4th (16th) December 1900 lays down that the Rente held abroad and in the possession of foreign subjects shall be exempt from the income tax, to which it is subject alike with other paper money, and shall moreover enjoy some advantages of circulation. That is to say, the Rente is to be made palatable to the foreign market so as to avoid its return home. Every year new lots of these Government securities are quietly thrown upon the market, so that the total value of these papers must have been, at the close of 1901, 2800 million roubles. Thus the amortisation of the National Debt recedes into the background.

At the same time the National Debt is growing apace, and also the obligations of private railway companies to foreigners. Golowin<sup>1</sup> calculated that about a year

<sup>1</sup> *Golowin*, p. 67.

ago the total of all obligations, public as well as private, including foreign capital invested in Russian industries abroad, amounted to 850,000 million roubles. However, we will leave private obligations alone and keep those of the State alone in view. In the Budget Report of 1902 the Minister gives the total amount of the National Debt down to the 1st January 1902 as 6497·3 million roubles. As a set-off to this sum he puts down as assets of the Government the investments of capital of the Treasury and the certain demands at 4614·8 million roubles which would leave an actual debt of only 1882·5 million roubles. According to this the National Debt has, during the last ten years, decreased by 1143·8 million roubles. This is most surprising. In the first place, these figures do not correspond with those of the official organ,<sup>1</sup> in which there figures a debt of 6469·7 millions, and a remaining debt of the Treasury of 1331 $\frac{1}{2}$  millions, after a deduction of the assets, *i.e.*, 551 $\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles less than the sums quoted by the Minister. Such differences leave the accuracy of the publications open to suspicion. Even more suspicious does it seem to see the value of the State railways quoted at 3551·6 million roubles. Their value cannot possibly be estimated by the cost of construction alone, but the interest must also be taken into account. We have seen above that the interest, which is to amount to 4 per cent., does not appear very clearly in the accounts of the Government offices. Let us see how this value of capital of 3551·6 millions is arrived at. I have had occasion to mention that the net profit of the railways is given as 400 million francs.<sup>2</sup> These 150 million roubles, capitalised at 4 per cent., give 3750 million roubles more, therefore, than the Minister's report quotes. But the Minister says in the same report that the net profits of the railways are "small," which we may confidently translate into "non-existent." The fact is that the railways have in reality not yielded any net profit and have only been able to pay interest on their debenture issues with

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, pp. 9 and 545.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

difficulty. The Asiatic railways make the condition of affairs worse. The asset of 3551·6 millions would therefore appear rather problematical. A second item are the annuities of the private railways, which only amount to 22 million francs, or 8½ million roubles. A third item are the "land obligations" of the peasants, quoted at the lowest computation, viz., at 33½ million roubles, or 90 million francs. This item too, seems rather questionable when one hears that, according to reports of the Treasury, the arrears of these so-called payments amounted, on the 2nd January 1901, to 250 million roubles, whereas the entire amount of land obligations for 1900 only amounted to 77·7 millions. Therefore, for 1900, more than the threefold quotation is in arrears. Just as doubtful seems the hypothesis that these payments will increase in the future when one considers the position of the peasants on which it is based. The last amount is the fifth, which shows 214,561,500 roubles as surplus of the Treasury in its dealings with the National Bank. If this surplus may be taken as actually existing it must be remarked that the principal part is played by the gold reserve of 648 millions. This reserve forms, as is well-known, the security for the floating bank loan of 630 million roubles, and this reserve, as well as the entire bank operations of the State, are subject to continual change, and can therefore not serve as a firm security for capital. If the Russian National Debt were taken up entirely, or for the greater part, in the country itself it would not be dangerous to the national credit and to the new gold standard. It lies, however, to a great extent abroad, and the interest and the amortisation have to be paid for in gold. It increases year by year by new issues of 4 per cent. Rentes in the country, and abroad by loans and the sale of railway securities. In the course of 1901 there were sold in Berlin, besides the already mentioned French loan of 435 million francs, bonds of various private railways to the amount of 80 million marks, and these will be followed by further millions no doubt.

At least, according to Budget estimate for 1901, not only 80 million marks, but 82 million roubles of such bonds were issued, and these the Minister will hardly allow to lie idle in the till, as those first 80 millions have so easily found buyers. Since 1894 similar railway debentures to the amount of 900 million marks had found their way to Berlin. Although these are private bonds they are guaranteed by the State and increase the "gold tribute" payable abroad; the truth is that they are indirect foreign State loans. The efflux of gold, as far as it is not covered by the balance of trade, has to be checked by the three old means—loans, sale of securities, influx of capital for industrial enterprises. Even now a change is to be noticed with regard to gold. In his Budget Report for 1901 the Minister confesses that, after having grown steadily for years, the gold reserve of the country has decreased during the year 1899 by 24·6 millions, and in 1900 by 74·1 millions even. This would have been of little consequence considering that the gold reserve in the National Bank amounts to over 700 millions. But possibly the efflux will increase further and thus create an adverse balance which might shake the new gold standard. The latter is not dependent upon the power, however great, of a single man, but ultimately upon the development of the economic life of the country itself. The value of the exports has remained stationary from 1887 to within the last years, and amounted to about 700 million roubles; the imports fluctuated between 500 and 600 millions. Amongst the imports metals, worked and unworked, take the first place, and in 1893 only 90·2 millions worth of these was imported. With the conclusion of the treaties of Commerce this amount immediately rose to 137·2 millions in the year 1894, and had reached, by 1898, 171·8 millions. Machinery and other material for industrial undertakings was introduced, and besides this agricultural machinery; that is to say, a great deal was spent upon things the usefulness of which remains to be proved.

Since the industrial crash of 1898 this import has decreased. The entire exports, in consequence of the failure of the harvests in 1897 and 1898, show a decrease, but have risen again during the first eleven months of the year 1901. Now, as before, corn is playing the principal part in the exports, and this in spite of the failure of the harvests of the present year.<sup>1</sup> Yet even the figures respecting the balance of trade in Russia during the last years do not tally.<sup>2</sup> However this may be, it is a fact that the exports can only be kept at the required level by an artificial impetus. The Budget Report for 1902 affirms that in comparison to the last unfavourable five years the harvests of 1901 have produced a loss of 236 million poods. If this is correct the export would have to amount to about one half of the last years if sufficient corn for the subsistence of the people is to remain in the country. Instead of this it has risen during the first eleven months of 1901 by about 100 million poods. According to all statistics, if this continues the Russian nation must simply become extinct in a few years. However inaccurate these calculations may be, the declaration of the Minister, that the harvest of 1901 was one of the least favourable, may certainly be believed. Anyone will readily understand what this means to a people who for ten years past have been reduced to a state of semi-starvation. To-day the bread is sold abroad, and in the following spring it is so dear in the country that the peasant cannot buy it. Nevertheless, even these abnormal conditions have their limits. The export of corn will not be able to maintain its hitherto high position and the balance of trade will become unfavourable. If the Minister can proudly point to his financial successes, and rightly so, it will be difficult, all the same, to come to the conclusion that these successes clearly show the "imperturbability of the Russian Exchequer." The national credit of Russia is good

<sup>1</sup> 1902.

<sup>2</sup> The New York Trade Statistics show, for the year 1900, a deficit of 12 million dollars on the Russian balance of trade.

and in very strong hands. It is supported by the prevailing confidence of Europe in the inexhaustible natural treasures and in the greatness of the Empire. No doubt this opinion rests upon indisputable facts. The wealth of the Russian Empire is very great. Apart from its railways, crown lands, mines, it possesses in Europe and in Asia 238 million dessatins of forest land, which during the year 1900 yielded a profit of 41 million roubles; for 1902 the profit has been estimated at 63 million roubles. This is little in comparison with other countries. The State forests of Prussia, Bavaria, Wurtemburg, Baden, Hesse only comprise altogether rather more than 4 million dessatins, but yield a profit of 37 to 40 million roubles.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the State forests of Russia in Europe have a very considerable value, which is growing from year to year. The Church possesses in convents and churches great treasures of precious metal and precious stones. If one sets off this national and ecclesiastical capital against the total amount of the National Debt, the latter seems to lose greatly in threatening power. And yet in the economic life of the people, as well as the finances of the State, living, productive capital alone has any practical value, and neither the jewels of the Church nor the wildernesses of Siberia are productive in any way. The Minister, therefore, perhaps, overrates the credit of the State, when he declares (Budget Report for 1902) that the same "requires no special securing." The French do not seem to share this view any longer. As has been said, Monsieur Witte has refused, during the winter of 1901-1902, their request for special security for a new loan, and therefore the latter has been contracted, to the amount of 181 million roubles, in Germany and in Holland. There, however, a special pledge is given in the Chinese indemnity, and it will appear in a short time whether Monsieur Witte will be able to keep to his proud standpoint that the general credit of the State is quite sufficient for new loans. The two Ministers, Wyschnegradski and Witte, have endowed

<sup>1</sup> Radzig, Lecture at the Society of Economists in St Petersburg, 1900.

political economy with considerable expansion, as much by direct administration as by the influence which the State has upon private economics. The question is only in how far they have advanced economic prosperity, upon which political economy and State finances rest. And here the opinions of two authorities diametrically oppose each other. Monsieur Witte declared in November 1899, and is declaring again and again in public, how firmly fixed is the financial position of Russia. He considers the economic position of the people good, for he thinks so splendid a financial position cannot possibly co-exist with prostrate industrial life. The privy councillor, Schwanebach, one of the most prominent advisers and former collaborators of the same Minister, speaks as follows<sup>1</sup> of the two great fields of economic life—industry and agriculture: “With the present state of affairs our insufficiently developed industries can scarcely form the firm support of the Value which it ought to be, according to the plan of financial reforms. Rather must one feel anxiety lest industrial difficulties should complicate even more the originally not easy task to finally place the Value in a position of security.”

Thus two authoritative voices oppose each other. Monsieur Witte's undertaking is so tremendous that no statesman before him has ever attempted anything similar, not to say succeeded in it. Monsieur Witte is no doubt an extraordinary power and possesses the capacity to unfold this power in an unusual degree. But his labours, as we shall see later, are greater than those of the Danaides, than that of Hercules; he is not a dictator and has to reckon with other powers which hinder him in many ways. Wyschnegradski has broken down physically under the strain of the work. If the strength of Monsieur Witte should give out, if to-day or to-morrow he should resign his office—what then? Who would be able to enter upon his heritage? Even he can scarcely succeed in making the Russian people skip by one bold leap centuries of the slow development Europe has had to undergo. The strong remedies

<sup>1</sup>p. 231.

which he uses, in rather a mechanical external fashion, increase the anaemia of which the people are sickening in spite of the gold-filled coffers of the State. Splendid finances cannot hide the ominous fact that the Empire is in danger of great upheavals from sheer exhaustion.

I shall endeavour in the following chapters to trace in the internal conditions the causes of this great danger with which we were confronted in the preceding chapter in connection with foreign politics.

## CHAPTER IV

### INDUSTRIES

THE mighty impetus given to industrialism in Europe and America is the work of a comparatively short period. The forms and measures which we look at to-day with astonishment reach back, with their beginnings, only to the middle of the last century, to the time when not only the technique of machinery had reached comparative perfection owing to the use of steam, but when also possibilities were opened up by steamers and railways of distributing the increasing products of these industries in great quantities and over ever-widening areas. This revolution caused by the advent of steam met in Europe and Europe taught America with conditions which a slow process of civilisation had prepared and without which it would surely not have been possible to change the entire economic life of the people so suddenly. Even before the days of steam industries did exist. The Middle Ages boasted of a highly-developed commercial life. Industries were flourishing long before the days of Watt and Stephenson. Urban trades had long ago raised a number of townships to a high state of prosperity and culture and had produced a numerous and educated class, by whom arts and science and technique were fostered and handed down from father to son. After all, the steam engine was only a means, though a very powerful one, which helped existing industries to advance with greater rapidity. Industrial training, economic needs, the ways and means for satisfying them, were already there in embryo, and it was they which rendered possible the

immediate use and development of the new forms of engineering, working with steam and electricity. Equally ancient were the trade routes which the steam engine found in existence. And lastly, industrial revolution followed everywhere closely the gold veins of capital, the mass of accumulated wealth in the various countries. England, who alone was left in proud isolation after the Napoleonic wars with her sea trade, and who used her monopoly for the accumulation of great wealth, was first in a position to exploit new inventions and discoveries, for the very reason that she had the necessary capital for this purpose at her disposal. Thus the growth of industries has continued to follow the accumulation of capital in France, Belgium, Denmark, America, and in Germany also after her unification and the influx of millions in 1871. In short, for the development of industries in our own days, even in countries well endowed by Nature for this purpose, three things are essential as primary conditions: technical education, capital, and a sound middle class. Which of these conditions, however, was fulfilled when Monsieur Witte set to work to emancipate Russia industrially?

Until the time of the abolition of serfdom in 1861 there existed in Russia proper almost no industries at all, except those connected with agriculture. There were to be found in Moscow, Tula, St Petersburg, Odessa a few cloth manufactories, iron works, cotton factories, etc., but the great mass of the industrial wants of the people were satisfied by home industries, carried on in the villages and on the estates. Even thirty years ago the peasant in the coal districts of the East shivered in his hut because he could not buy any fuel, with coal lying unused at his very door. With the growth of railways, no doubt, the wants of the people increased, but the first and real impetus to the demand for the refined products of industrial Europe was only given in consequence of the emancipation of the serfs, which made it possible for the peasant to become a town operative. The peasant brought with him no sort of training into

the town, except that which he had received on his master's estate as blacksmith or carpenter, or his wife as lacemaker or embroiderer. The home industry of these estates fell into decay from the moment that the so-called estate people left the estates as free men ; the village industries, which had here and there given employment to entire villages and districts in waggon-building, with the manufacture of knee timber, of saints' pictures, of wooden spoons, and in the weaving of coarse stuffs, began to decay almost everywhere where the railway carried town competition. There existed in Russia—I am speaking of Russia proper, not of the conquered alien countries—very little useful industrial training, except that which could be acquired in the roughest kind of work on the weaving-stool, by the spinning-wheel, with saw and hatchet, with knife and needle ; there were almost no workmen except agricultural labourers, often, it is true, endowed with an astonishing faculty for settling down under all sorts of adverse conditions with the simplest tools, but after all only with that natural aptitude which suffices for the production of the most primitive necessaries of life, and totally different from the town operative as he was to be found in Germany in the fourteenth century, yea, even in the eleventh. The fact is there existed no town industries properly so-called, just as there existed no citizenship, no town life of any social importance. In the half-dozen towns with more than fifty thousand inhabitants, manufactures were almost entirely in the hands of foreigners ; in trade alone the Russian had acquired a firm position, but only within the country itself—all foreign trade was in the hands of Germans, English, Dutch, etc.

Between 1861 and 1895 some changes took place in this respect, principally in consequence of the sudden changes in agrarian conditions. The abolition of serfdom had set free a number of hands, and immediately afterwards many hundred millions of redemption bonds and State loans granted to the landed nobility flowed into the country. People began to flock

into the towns—the nobleman with his money, the peasant with his handicrafts—and thus the first impetus was given to industrial enterprises. But this first wave was lost in the sands. Everything proved to be but artificial froth and bubble; enterprises arose through this rain of millions which neither created industrious citizens nor reproductive capital. The capital was mostly lost, and of the enterprises very few flourished; but, on the other hand, the demand for manufactures and their importation steadily increased. Nothing new was produced by the agrarian revolution of 1861, no new labouring class, no wealthy middle class, and since both of these are primary conditions for industrial growth, the industries of the country could make no headway. The Frontier Provinces, especially Poland, flourished all the more, and it came to this: that petitions were made for the introduction of an octroi which was to protect the Russian industries, those of Moscow in particular, against those of the Western Provinces. In the mechanical and short-sighted manner which is characteristic of the Cabinet, the Government thought to enable the industries, which had grown up almost entirely through foreign material and foreign workmen on the Western frontier, to ignore the Frontier Provinces altogether and to establish themselves straightway in the Centre—on the Ural, the Donez—where iron and coal were plentiful. The German and Belgian manufacturers often refused to erect factories in places where raw materials were indeed abundant but where there was an utter lack of skilled labour, especially of mechanics, so that even the repairing of a boiler was a difficulty. This was, in fact, often impossible until reserve parts had arrived from England or Germany. If a mechanic died the factory on the Volga would come to a stand-still for weeks until a substitute could be obtained from Europe, whereas, at Lodz, substitutes were plentiful, thanks to the proximity of the frontier and to the strong German immigration. Raw and unskilled as the Russian peasant was, he might possibly have been trained by a foreign foreman

into being a good workman if other adverse circumstances had not existed, and these were sufficient in themselves to make any competition of the Russian factory hand with the European operative impossible. One of these was that the Russian peasant is used to 90 or more holidays in the year, and that he can only accustom himself with difficulty to continuous work such as the factory employment entails, and that, moreover, State and Church do not permit him to disregard their numerous holidays and feasts. In Russia there are far more reasons than elsewhere why one should rest from one's labours. Comparing almanacs with one another the comparative number of Sundays and holidays is as follows:—

For Protestant Germany	58
For Catholic Germany	65
For Orthodox Russia	94

Imagine a factory in Elberfeld which kept 36 more holidays in the year than its competitor at Barmen; its shares would probably not reach a very high value.

Moreover, the Russian peasant in Russia proper is, with a few exceptions, a member of the village commune, and, as such, owner of a hut and of a piece of land on the common. If he leaves his village to become a workman in a Moscow factory he still carries round his leg, figuratively speaking, the rope which drags him back into his native village. "What do you suppose," said one of the leading factory owners in Moscow to me one day, "what do you suppose can be done with these people? They are all landed proprietors! The best of them learns, in the course of a few years, the management of an engine in my weaving factory, he produces good work, and receives more than the miserable wage which the ordinary operative is worth. In a few years he has saved two or three hundred roubles, then he begs for his dismissal in order to look after his house and home, and he leaves. In the village he is a rich man, one of the residents, and plays an important

part as long as his savings last. A year or two goes by and Trifon appears once more, cap in hand, bows down to the ground and begs for employment. 'Father Charles Iwanowitsch, old Trifon is back again,' and again bowing down to the ground. In the meantime new machinery has been introduced, Trifon himself has lost some of his skill during these two years and has to begin to learn all over again. Thus he rarely obtains a better position." In addition to this his piece of land in the village often does not produce enough to pay even the taxes, and he is therefore often obliged to supplement them by his savings and yet cannot tear himself free from his land. He is half peasant, half factory hand, and therefore a bad specimen of both.

Moreover, bureaucratic tyranny has shown no consideration for the few slightly-trained hands in the country. Even to-day there are large villages in which thousands of peasants maintain themselves as cutlers, in others as carpenters, but instead of supporting, helping, and fostering them, they have been allowed to become beggars in the hands of middlemen. These and many other instances must make it appear doubtful whether flourishing and stable industries can grow on a soil totally unprepared and encumbered by social and economic disadvantages. Japan has just furnished an example of an entirely recluse nation suddenly opening its arms to European civilisation and in the course of a few decades coming very near to the attainment of industrial independence. But this example does not hold good for Russia. It is true Japan possessed no industries on a large scale, but it had, long ago, before the appearance of the first boiler, a rich industrial life. Handicrafts were very old, very perfect—arts and crafts had flourished in many ways for centuries past—trained workmen were numerous, in short, it had an ancient culture of its own and a very industrious, thrifty population. With regard to all this Russia lags far behind Japan. The Russian workman was further off from any comprehen-

hension for European industries than the Japanese, and the Russian *entrepreneur* had less capacity for the management of a factory than had the Japanese. He also had less capital.

This lack of money was of all the adverse circumstances the one which could most easily have been overcome. Neither trained workmen, however, nor enterprising citizens could be raised in one night from these townless plains. If one could have waited until, after the lapse of decades, the growing land-population would flock into the towns, would found new towns, and in those, industries; if things were to follow their natural course, and industries and manufactories develop gradually, as had been the case in Europe, there was the risk that Russian townships, Russian industries, would never come into existence at all, for the start Europe had had was so great that Russian industries would have been crushed either by the importation of foreign manufactures or by the immigration of the foreign working-classes, as had been the case many centuries before in Poland. Of course, any real industrial progress without foreign manufactures and without foreigners themselves was not to be thought of, but to place oneself entirely into foreign hands and to see nothing but towns like Lodz springing up on all sides was too much for the national pride. The Polish instance was not tempting to Russian self-respect, and, it seems to me, not to that of the Germans or Belgians or French either. For, after having created flourishing townships in Poland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Germans were to a great extent crowded out and driven away, the towns themselves becoming regular nests of Jews, which most of them have remained ever since.

The Russian Financial Minister, Wyschnegradski, and, after him, Monsieur Witte, made up their minds to effect the industrial emancipation of Russia by the aid of capital. Without citizens and without workmen it was useless to attempt competition with European industries and European capital. But the necessary

capital? The State had none to spare, the people little; recourse therefore had to be had to foreign capital and to obtaining what little there was in the country for industrial enterprises. Monsieur Witte expressed himself thus, respecting his plans, on the 13th of March 1899:—"The influx of capital for the development of industries is indispensable. Unfortunately we have an insufficient amount of it at our disposal. Of this agriculture hardly supplies any, that which lies elsewhere in stockings remains immovable; although it might easily earn high interest it seems impossible to draw it to the light of day. We must, therefore, use the plentiful and cheap foreign capital. In this way the tedious period of school training will be shortened and the school itself improved by the contact with a higher standard of technical knowledge, with a more broad-minded, industrial impetus and a more active competition. In this school one cannot slumber, one must work and do nothing but work. True, the assistance of this foreign capital will not be paid for cheaply. . . . On the other hand, simple arithmetic proves the absolute advantage of the importation of foreign capital over that of foreign manufactures. Evidently this was, even in the year 1894, the programme of the Minister when he began to convert the entire internal debt into 4 per cent. stock and then into a 4 per cent. terminable Rente. The immediate effect of this conversion was the influx of capital to the Bourse, where it sought investments with higher interest and thus caused the first fever of speculation. To this fresh fuel was added from above, from the Government, for it placed loan after loan upon the foreign market, it threw money by the handfuls over the country, a great part of which served to give an impetus to industrialism. This was more especially the case, owing to the rapid extension of railways. Every new line was the cause of a new or increased demand for rails, rolling stock, coals, buildings, ants, bridges, telegraphs, etc., and these demands in their turn entailed the erection of factories and of all

sorts of workshops. In all countries the iron and steel industries are the corner-stones of the modern industrial edifice. If these industries are flourishing one may assume that the industries of the country as a whole are prosperous ; if, on the contrary, they decline, all production is arrested, and it is therefore the chief concern of every Government to keep the iron and steel industries in a flourishing state. This, therefore, has ever been the care of the Russian Minister, and thus, at the head of an uninterrupted procession of enterprises, the State marched foremost with its railway constructions, iron-works, locomotive factories, carriage works, etc., far in advance of all others, of the chemical factories, the cement works, etc., which brought up the rear. Following its lead, factories cropped up on all sides, most numerously, of course, in the central districts of Moscow and Vladimir, but also in the Donez district, rich in coal and iron, in the great ports where foreign engineering skill and English coal were available, and in Poland, where German and Jewish capital and Silesian coal were close at hand.

Between 1894 and 1899, 927 joint-stock companies were registered, with a capital of 1420 millions, and, according to the statistics of Schwanebach, with an actual working capital of 560 to 600 million roubles. Industrial production advanced in a corresponding degree from 541 millions in the year 1877 to 802 millions in the year 1887, and to 1010 millions in the year 1892 ; but it bounded upwards within the next five years—1892-97—to 1816 millions ; that is to say, by 161.2 million roubles per annum. And during the six years of Monsieur Witte's mission of industrialism, from 1894 to 1899, 1273 millions were spent upon the construction of railways and upon rolling stock. It is evident that there is some close connection here, that this increase in industrial production was chiefly due to the increased construction of railways and not to the easier circulation of manufactures by these new railways. A great number of the new industrial enterprises came into existence because of the railway construction, and were

fed by it and still subsist upon it even to this day. Schwanebach estimates that over 200 million roubles were sunk within these six years in railway construction and in the establishment of the brandy monopoly. The fruits of this golden rain, of course, showed themselves in a great increase of the taxes connected with these enterprises. Under the head of taxes which principally have to be considered here, *i.e.*, commercial taxes, excise, stamp and other duties, posts and telegraphs, the profits rose by 236 millions, that is to say, by 37 per cent. Unfortunately this increase did not come about, as in Germany after 1871, through the country's own means, but principally through the influx of foreign money, of which the interest and the principal would have to be repaid later in gold, and to a small extent only through the use of Russian capital, the sinking of which in industrial enterprises deprived the country, poor as it was, of the necessary means to support its principal industry—agriculture. The Russian capital which was used in industrial enterprises consisted to a great extent in the profit realised by the sale of landed estates and by mortgages with which the properties were burdened. After having turned the greater part of the railways into State property, whilst the construction of new lines, of the principal network at anyrate, was carried on by monopoly, this assistant industry fell into absolute dependence on the Minister, since even the private railways were financially dependent on him. Smelting furnaces, coal mines, cylinder works, carriage factories or workshops for repairs, even if they were not in themselves State enterprises, were all of them wholly subsistent upon the railways, and especially upon railway construction. The Minister brought many private factories of this kind into existence by his direct influence, and at first they found sufficient work and profit enough. But as there occurred a hitch in the solvency of the State railways, as other circumstances called for economy, he had to burden these assistant industries. The prices

for carriages or rails were reduced. If a factory owner refused to accept this reduction he received no orders, and as he was, after all, as one says in Russia, "dependent upon supplying the Crown," he had finally to give in. In this way the Minister almost strangled many a factory; it was obliged to work without profits for a time, and the large dividends disappeared. This was of no account. Since the factory happened to be there it must henceforth work not for its shareholders but for the good of the State; it had become to a certain degree a State institution, as the railways were also. Many a foreign company, meanwhile, had to learn by bitter experience that it was permitted to launch into industrial enterprises and to pay for them, but that it was by no means allowed to have the only voice in the declaration of profit and of dividends. Fiscal interests make their appearance even here, and often in a surprising manner. The entire railway industry obeys the will of the Minister whose hand supports it. And this Minister is the Financial Minister.

This Minister had succeeded in obtaining a similar control in another direction by the introduction of the brandy monopoly. The distilleries had been dependent upon him for a long time through the taxation of raw spirit and the very burdensome control of the distilleries connected with it. By monopolising the trade and the production of brandy, the manufacturer is forced to sell his brandy to the Treasury, for there is no other purchaser. The Treasury, therefore, regulates the prices according to its own ideas, and as it is always inclined to generalise and to fix a uniform price convenient for accounts for large districts, and if possible for the whole Empire, it happens that, should potatoes in Jaroslav be double the price of those in Grodno, the spirit distilled from them would nevertheless fetch the same price in both places. In reality, what happens is this: in order to fix the price for brandy which is to be granted to the distilleries, the price for the raw material is ascertained first of all. In this connection no mystery is made of the fact that the degree of pros-

perity in this or that province is taken into account. You in Podolia or in Kurland are far more prosperous than those in Tver or Saratov, therefore we fix the price of the cwt. of potatoes at 50 kopecks and in Twer at 80 kopecks. Thus the more industrious workers are taxed in favour of the lazy ones, and not by law but by arbitrary measures. Not only the brandy traffic, but also the distillery business, is entirely at the mercy of the Financial Minister, who exploits it arbitrarily for the benefit of the Treasury. For the Treasury it is more convenient to have to deal with a few large distilleries than with many small ones, for which reason the number of distilleries has diminished to about one half. The distilleries, which were encouraging agriculture, have vanished and are vanishing, and manufactures are extending.

Another large industry, namely, that of sugar refinery, has been developed powerfully under the care of the Government. Beetroot sugar was protected from the beginning of the "seventies" by high duties and has thus remained in existence until to-day. By the law of November 20th 1895 an organisation of sugar manufacturers has been founded whose business it is to restrict production and to regulate the inland price year by year. The cultivation of beetroot grew rapidly in the Southern Provinces, Russian sugar gradually driving out that of foreign manufacture. Who profited by this? *Vice versa*, as in the case of the brandy, agriculture profits by the sugar. In the one case the Government crushes agriculture; in the other it encourages and helps it. At all events, sugar makes it possible for a number of large, mostly very large, properties to go in for intensive cultivation and to make large profits. It is true often by the sacrifice of forests, which are used to build factories and to supply fuel for the boilers. The Treasury makes a profit on this sugar tax which is estimated in the Budget for 1902 at 69·4 million roubles. But it is the tax-payer who pays for the profits of factory owners and of the Government, and to so large an extent that this duty

again appears quite as a financial tax and not as an ordinary duty. The price paid in the country by consumers is three or four times as high as that paid abroad for Russian sugar ; the price paid abroad for the sugar to the Russian manufacturer does not cover the cost of production, and the balance must be raised by the consumer in Russia.

A curious announcement with regard to this appeared not long ago, on the 3rd (16th) March 1902, in the official paper of the financial ministry, *The Financial Messenger*. Firstly, it declares that the organisation of 1895 aims at supplying the inland market with cheap sugar. Whether this purpose has been attained is not mentioned, but neither that it is the reverse which has been attained, *i.e.*, that the sugar has become more expensive, which is evident from the above-mentioned discrepancy in the prices of the inland and the foreign sale. All the world is agreed that, in consequence of the monopoly introduced by the Sugar Syndicate, sugar has become three or four times as expensive in the country as that which is exported and sold abroad. *The Financial Messenger* says that, according to the calculation of the sugar manufacturers, 32 million roubles have been lost upon the sugar sold to Western Europe since September 1895, that is to say, since the organisation of the Sugar Syndicate. The sugar export amounts to 10-12 per cent. of the production, and these 12 percent. have, therefore, been sold with a loss of 32 millions. These 32 million roubles, the difference between the cost of production and the profit on the sales, are, of course, charged to the inland consumer by the manufacturers. According to official accounts, the entire production since 1895 amounts to 286½ million poods, the inland consumption to 204 million poods. If this loss of 32 million roubles be distributed over the total consumption the entire production has to pay 15 kopecks per pood, the inland consumption 13½ kopecks per pood of the loss upon the export. To these 13½ kopecks per pood must be added the profits of the

manufacture and the refineries. *The Financial Messenger* confesses, as is well-known, that the factories pay high dividends and that the refineries are in the hands of a few monopolists, who fix the prices unfavourably. Manufactories and refineries, therefore, add to these  $13\frac{1}{2}$  kopecks per pood their high profits, and the State takes its tax of  $69\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles as well, so that the three and fourfold raising of the sugar prices in the country is explained. But it is difficult to understand how the purpose of the law of 1895 to supply the inland market with cheap sugar is fulfilled. It remains clear that the State gains more than 69 million roubles on the sugar, and that this organisation of 1895 has put an indirect high export premium upon the raw sugar. Upon this point the delegates of the Brussels Sugar Convention, which has just closed, entertain no doubt.

The wild Protectionism of Wyschnegradski, culminating in the tariff of 1891, was moderated from 1st January 1894 by the Russo-German Treaty of Commerce, but it still remained the ruling system. However, import increased rapidly, stimulated by the demand for industrial and agricultural machinery. The import duties rose, although only slightly at first, still so much that in 1896 they amounted to 182 millions ; they were further dependent on the intensity of the fever for commercial enterprises which the Minister had to take into consideration, just so far as it was absolutely necessary. The industrial crisis of 1898 caused the reduction in the tariff profits. Wherever it was thought possible to get on without the help of foreign manufactures there importation was prohibited without a scruple. Railways and factories of all kinds were obliged to order materials and manufactures from factories in the country, although these inland products (apart from raw material) were generally of an inferior quality and more expensive than foreign ones. Radzig<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Issajew's article, "Policy of the Russian Financial Ministry from the middle of the 'eighties." Stuttgart, 1898,

says, "Russia has bought during the twelve years from 1884 to 1895, for railway construction, 113 million poods of rails of Russian manufacture," and he calculates that if these had been bought in England 92 million roubles would have been saved. If one adds to this sum only half of the subsidies which the State grants to the rail factories, this gives an expenditure of more than 100 million roubles. "For these more than 100 million roubles," says Radzig, "which have been paid in excess for rails since the year 1884 a further 2000 versts of railway might have been built. Since 1895 further enormous numbers of rails of Russian manufacture have been used, especially for the Siberian railway." Those supplied for the construction of the Siberian railway were of an inferior or light quality, and had to be replaced by heavier ones, yet these wretched rails had been paid for with 2 roubles, 25 kopecks per pood, whilst the English, which would probably have been better, had been offered at 70 kopecks per pood, that is to say, at a third of the price of Russian rails.<sup>1</sup> If one considers in addition to this what other State and private railways have used since 1895 in rails, another 100 million roubles is easily to be accounted for. No doubt the Government is justified in its endeavour of perfecting so important a branch of iron industries as the manufacture of rails as required by the growing traffic in the country. But when even such great sacrifices as the granting of a subsidy of 200 million roubles for rails is unable to raise within sixteen years the standard of work of the home factories to a higher level, characterised as it is by the difference in price we have mentioned, it must be assumed that this artificially-created industry has defects which cannot be removed within a proportionate period. Meanwhile, the apprenticeship is too costly. As is the case of the rails, so is that of other manufactures. The State, the people, pay through the nose for the sugar and for many other things artificially forced

<sup>1</sup> "Report of Mons. Birukow at the Society of Pol. Economists," *St Petersburg Gazette*, p. 287, 1901.

by tariff, produced badly and expensively with the sole advantage of their being Russian. These examples show that capital alone is not sufficient to create an industry adequate to our standard of to-day. They tend to prove that even where capital is combined with good and sufficient raw material, as in this case of iron and coal, the start which a country of well-seasoned workmen and a class of commercially and technically-trained men has obtained, cannot be made up for, even in ten years, much less in a country like Russia, which lacks even the teachers who might raise theoretical education, at least, to a higher level. Even if she possessed the very best of teaching elements and an abundance of schools, modern industries require more than these; they require a population skilled in manual labour, whose technical understanding and mechanical knowledge are, so to speak, part of its flesh and blood. A hard-working population with customs and traditions in which the right man takes his place at the helm easily and without making too great and too frequent mistakes, a population to whose boys, even, the choice of a profession is of importance, in whom industrial labour is a natural impulse. In this character developed by centuries of work of a population especially fitted for industries, lies the chief strength to which Europe and European America owe their industries. These industries are guided, inspired by science; their period of prosperity was preceded by the flourishing of natural science, which breathed life and spirit into them, and in the future, too, they must ever be accompanied, led by science.

The professor, however, was succeeded by the engineer, the commercial man, the workman with well-tried traditional experience, with a practical sense, with perseverance and industry. Everywhere manual labour must have obtained a firm footing before industrial enterprises on a large scale can be thought of. This is not even to-day the case in Russia—an artizan class does not exist, except in a few of the larger towns. It is universally thought in Russia to-day that the national schools might further industries if they were better and more

of them existed; and no doubt the workman who is able to read, write and who knows arithmetic is preferable to the present one, who is only too often ignorant of these things. Even England's workmen have been educated by practice—her class of skilled workmen is not a product of technical schools, her knowledge upon this field is not of the highest order. England possesses no technical schools, no commercial schools to be compared with the German schools of this class, and yet her work in the field of practical engineering is without a parallel. No Russian Minister can create in a night this class of workman, schooled by the knowledge and experience of generations, neither by national nor technical schools. Of these technical schools there are four existing; but the number of so-called industrial and commercial schools has been growing for the last five years, so that one begins to wonder where the teachers are to be trained. Trubnikow<sup>1</sup> enumerates 190 of them. According to other accounts at least 100 schools have been founded by private means since 1896; they have more than 20,000 scholars and cost every year  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles. The Financial Minister expends upon schools of this kind, roughly,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions (Budget for 1902). But the number of technically-trained teachers in the country is small, and moreover, those of Polish or German nationality preponderate. If, nevertheless, industries show a surprisingly strong growth since 1895, the cause must be sought for in the high protective tariff, in the immigration of foreign *entrepreneurs*, who exploit this tariff, in the influx of foreign capital, of foreign engineers and foremen, in the liberal support granted in the shape of money and of orders by the Government. Thus the Russian home producer, supplied with defective knowledge, little experience and very little money of his own, when under the leadership of the Government threw himself headlong into the stream of industrial life. But what about the consumer? For whom was to be manufactured?

<sup>1</sup> Trubnikow, *The Wealth of Russia*, vol. i. p. 61.

Even so sanguine a man as Monsieur Witte cannot rise to the hope that industrial Russia will, within an appreciable time, attain to any exportation of manufactures into Europe worth mentioning. Asia offers better prospects and all the longing of Russian politicians is directed towards this market. It stands open to Russian manufactures from the Pacific Ocean to the Euphrates. What is it that they have exported thither? Unfortunately I have not the figures at my disposal for this Asiatic export, but if one realises that the entire export of manufactures in the year 1894 amounted to 9½ millions, in the year 1895 to 11·2 million roubles,<sup>1</sup> and that from 1887 to 1899, on the average the yearly export reached 25·6 millions, that is to say, 3·7 per cent.<sup>2</sup> of the entire Russian export, one can hardly expect from the Asiatic market any real influence upon industrial production of the worth of 1800 million roubles, even if this Asiatic market consumes the greater part of these manufactures. Production, therefore, is at present dependent upon the home market, and how receptive is this home market?

A country with 126 million inhabitants<sup>3</sup> and undeveloped industries is prone to have a tempting charm for the German commercial man. He will probably argue that these 126 millions of white people probably have a greater need for civilisation, for the products of economic culture, than a similar number of negroes or of Indians. That if at present they have few requirements this can only be on account of their defective knowledge of the pleasures of civilisation, and that therefore it is necessary to bring these into contact with them in order to stir their desire for purchase. He may further consider that this country contains rich natural treasures, and that, in fact, it has produced an enormous amount of corn in recent times and has sold a great deal of it abroad, that is to say, in five years, from 1887 to 1891,

<sup>1</sup> *Issajew*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Schwanebach*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Census of 1897, Miltukow counts 129 millions, including Finland.

442 million poods, and in the five years from 1893 to 1897 even 523 million poods. He may further calculate that so great an exportation of corn as this must have caused increased prosperity in the country, or will create it, which is proved by the splendid state of the finances. He may further come to the conclusion that, considering all this, the present moment is the most favourable for industrial enterprise in this country. He could argue thus before knowing the actual conditions in this country, but after having observed them more carefully he must come to the conclusion that his calculation is very erroneous. He must notice that of 126 million people only a small number, perhaps a few millions, are in a position to require the more delicate products of manufacture; that these few millions are accustomed to foreign products of this kind and are spoilt by them; that 90 per cent., or, if one excludes the non-Russian Frontier Provinces, about 70 per cent. of the 126 millions have remained in a condition (in spite of the rich export of corn) which does not in the least stamp them as consumers of manufactures worth mentioning, and that economic and political conditions, finances and culture do not point to a speedy improvement in the condition of this population. Thus the home market of this country must appear to him less important, less receptive than it seemed at first sight to be the case, and he will therefore, after these considerations, set to work cautiously in all his enterprises.

The furthering of industries is the natural duty of every Financial Minister. A heating apparatus which would raise the temperature of the hot-house to twenty degrees might perhaps have been very beneficial to the orange, but when the heat rises to thirty or forty degrees many fruits cannot ripen. During the five years from 1892 to 1897 the productiveness of industries increased, as we have seen, by 806 million roubles, or by 161·2 million roubles every year; the iron industry doubled its production. Had then the prosperity of the nation improved so much during this short period? Had the demand for manufactures grown so as to

yield 161 millions more a year? Did industries find their market amongst the masses of the people? No, but the chief consumer was the Government itself with its railway construction undertaken by the Treasury or by companies with the help of the Treasury, and upon which during this period 1237 million roubles were spent. Not the Russian people but the Russian Treasury provided the market for the doubled and trebled industrial activity, the Treasury which borrowed the money in order to pay for the goods. The railway construction was carried on by the Treasury directly or indirectly, for, according to official accounts, the Government bears 94·9 per cent. of the cost of construction for the private railways.<sup>1</sup> Industries were and are carried on to a great extent by the Treasury; the State is even here the greatest, the chiefest *entrepreneur* in the country. Railway construction, brandy monopoly, industries, these are three powerful Government departments administered by the Financial Minister.

It is only a few years ago—it was, if I am not mistaken, in August 1895—that in St Petersburg there was held for the first time the dance around the golden calf of the Bourse so often held elsewhere. After 1861, when the Russian nobility lost their serfs and had received in return purchase bonds and bank loans, they too had begun to try this dance, but very moderately and in an awkward manner. Now, thirty years later, hundreds of millions flowed to St Petersburg to receive better interest or quicker increase of capital, and speculation was in full swing. Banks were founded, banks gave without much ado money for all possible and impossible industrial enterprises; there was even a call for an issuing bank, since the issue and sale of shares did not proceed quickly enough. Under the high protective tariff many enterprises yielded large profits. Until recent years the Tape showed companies which paid as much as 60 per cent. interest. But scarcely had three years passed when a little want of

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Review of the Railways in Russia, 1901. St Petersburg.

breath was felt. The value of capital in Europe rose, the want of money pressed upon many jerry-built enterprises, the Minister of Finances began to hold back with the State credit. A few large industrial firms, first Von Derwes, then Mamontowé failed. In spite of this, in the second half-year of 1899, 48 foreign companies were granted concessions; for the whole of 1899, 70 foreign companies, *i.e.*, more than in any former year. Altogether, at the close of 1899, concessions had been received by 146 foreign companies<sup>1</sup> with a nominal capital of 765 million roubles, or 2075 million francs, of which 792 millions fall to the share of France, 734 millions to Belgium, 261 millions to Germany, 231 million francs to England; of this, however, part was Russian capital under a foreign name. The Minister himself warned both personally, and by the Press, against too great haste, but in the universal fever which he had inflamed he was not heeded and all that was required of him was more money, fresh subsidies. It cannot be said, either, that such demands were astonishing since it was the Minister himself who had so openly and strongly encouraged this speculative fever. He endeavoured to help with words since he was unable to do so with money. In a long dissertation which appeared officially in the Press on 23rd October 1899 he explained that misfortune was not caused by lack of money, of which the never-before-reached sum of 1350 millions was to be found in the country, and that the values were in no way endangered. He also promised to open credit accounts through the State bank. Before this, even, he had drawn attention to the fact that the Government orders for railway construction would cease in the year 1900. On the other hand he tried to prevent discouragement. On 31st October 1899 he actually declared before the assembled directors of the private credit institutions "that the financial position of Russia was splendid, even more solid than that of France and England;" a declaration which shows to what a dangerous degree this Minister separated the

<sup>1</sup> *Frankfort Gazette*, January 1900.

position of his own department from the financial position of the people, and how he expected everything from the power of dazzling figures. Only one year passed and he had to learn the evil consequences of his error when the crash was approaching. The Minister himself had got into difficulties now.

The surplus would still have remained considerable, but extraordinary expenses had made their appearance and had emptied the Exchequer. The Minister would not issue new loans for the construction of the Siberian railway, but constructed it with ready money. Then there came the Chinese imbroglio, for the defraying of which he felt still less inclined to have recourse to loans. Therefore he had to use ready money for this purpose as well, and expended, as he announced (Budget of 1901), in the year 1900, roughly, 61 millions. In reality, however, the extraordinary expenditures for 1900 amounted to the considerable sum of 334 million roubles, an increase of, roughly, 141 millions on the Estimate. This exhausted the means of the State to such an extent that not much remained to help the threatened industries. The credit of the State was impaired, in consequence of this also the credit of private banks, and upon the direct or indirect State credit a great number of industrial institutions had been originally founded and were dependent. Thus came the crash.

In the course of the year 1900 all industrial securities fell, and at the beginning of October terror reigned on the St Petersburg Bourse. Even the agrarian banks lost on an average 70 roubles upon each share; the shares in the naphtha works of Nobel 144 roubles, and the bonds 3500 roubles a-piece, etc. A correspondent<sup>1</sup> compared, at the beginning of 1901, the Belgian companies to a heap of ruins; they were concerned with 734 million francs. From October 1900 onwards one firm after another collapsed; even during the last days of the year, from 22nd to 27th of December, the shares of the best companies fell every

<sup>1</sup> *Zurich Tages Anzeiger*. 1901, 25th April, p. 96.

day by a considerable amount, so that the *St Petersburg Gazette* exclaimed, on December 27th, "In view of all these shocking events one's reasoning power is arrested!" And on December 30th it wrote as follows: "It has been an evil year; thank God it is past at last. It will require many years to make one forget all misfortunes and to heal all wounds." Of 282 Bourse meetings which were held, almost 200 were distinguished by prevailing panic. Political events in the whole world and the precarious condition of the money market have, in common with keen disappointment about the activity and development of home industries, especially of the sudden decline in the metallurgic branch, imprinted a serious character upon the crisis of which we had to speak so often, especially during the last three months.

A report of the Ministry of Finances declared that 24 million roubles alone had been lost owing to factories and works which had been begun not being completed, because the conviction had been forced home that if they were put into working order they would never pay any interest upon their capital. Other works, to the value of 200 million roubles, had to be closed on account of lack of demand for their manufactures. For the same reason seventeen large foreign joint-stock companies paid, in the year 1900, no dividends. 734 millions of foreign, probably Belgian, capital paid less than 2½ per cent. interest. More than 400 factories dismissed all their workmen and ceased work. In the Donez district 25 out of 57 smelting furnaces were extinguished. Countless millions of pig-iron, so the correspondent of the *Zurich Tages Anzeiger* reported in April 1901, "are lying waiting for purchasers, and factories, which until now just managed to exist, are being closed continually. The greater part of the foreign capital," thus says the correspondent further, "is lost, and the blow to Russia herself is all the greater since it is hardly likely that in future foreign capital will seek lucrative enterprises in Russia." No doubt a great deal of capital was lost in senseless

speculations and over-hasty enterprises and through a superficial knowledge of the respective localities, but on the other hand it was proved that good interest in itself is very difficult to obtain in Russia; for even the Russian ironworks, which originally promised such high dividends, did not pay, even in the heydays of their prosperity, more than 5½ per cent. I do not mean by this that the intelligent, and at the same time cautious manufacturer and merchant could not find profitable employment for his capital and his activity in Russia. This correspondent says further: "To these causes must be added the unequal division of the productive strength of the country, the over-capitalisation of the new companies, their wild competition against each other with the one aim of driving the opponent into bankruptcy, and into wild Bourse speculation. A number of banks were ruined because they financed fantastic industrial enterprises or let themselves be drawn into agricultural speculations of which their directors had not the slightest notion. In numerous instances, too, costly factory buildings were erected and provided with the most expensive machinery, without their owners ever having made any estimate or having troubled whether the capital thus invested would pay interest even in good times. Most of the new joint-stock companies founded in recent years suddenly found themselves, after the completion of their factories, without any, or without sufficient, working capital." If we examine the money-market of the 1st January 1902 we find very little that could give us hope to regain lost industrial ground. It is true speculation has scarcely decreased on the Stock Exchange, for the *Premienloose*, this most speculative of all papers, predominates to-day. But the iron industry, this leader in the industrial market, has, since the last days of terror (October 1900), gone further back still. In comparing the quotations of the St Petersburg Bourse of 31st December 1896, 1900 and 1901 the following losses appear:—

SHARES	31st December			Loss in Roubles
	1896	1900	1901	
Alexandrowski Steel Foundry . . .	295	64	20	275
Bränsker Steelworks . . .	508	225	147	361
Donez-Jurjew Works . . .	350	90	47	303
Ssormowo Ironworks . . .	210	55	74½	135½
Kolomna Engine Works . . .	640	350	275	365
Malzew Factory . . .	656	490	335	321
Putilow Factory . . .	120	81	50	70
Russische Lokomotive Works . . .	230	218	163	67
Baltische Waggon Factory . . .	2165	1025	900	1265
Petersburger Metal Works . . .	265	156	103	162
Glebow . . .	135	3	0	135
Phonix Waggon Factory . . .	335	50	45	290

These figures betray a bad state of trade, and though they only refer to a few factories these are first-class works in the leading iron industry. These figures might be amplified by a long row of others which comprise every branch of industry. Six years of seeming brilliant industrial progress have sufficed to allow a sudden decrease, which has swallowed up for ever hundreds and hundreds of millions. However, the Minister has not yet lost his courage ; he has again resorted to foreign loans, which, considering the general scarcity of money in Europe, were neither so easily nor so cheaply contracted as before. Since May 1901 he brought 623 million marks<sup>1</sup> into the country, which were utilised for railway purposes. The lines Moscow-Kasan-Lodz received the means for extension of traffic ; three new lines were begun—the northern line, that of Orenburg-Tashkend, Bologoje-Sedlez—altogether about 4000 km., so that to-day 6298 versts of State and private railways are in the course of construction, apart

<sup>1</sup> French loan, 435 millions francs ; sold obligation 80 million marks.

from the 2377 versts<sup>1</sup> which are in construction by the Eastern Chinese Company. The Budget again shows, for railway constructions in 1902, 170½ million roubles.<sup>2</sup> Now again orders flowed to the ironworks, carriage factories, etc., which gave them security for a certain time. Without this help many of the works would to-day be worse off than the above quotations of the Bourse indicate. But how long will this help be sufficient? Are such lines as those of Orenburg-Tashkend or Bologoje-Sedlez perchance of a productive nature? Are the 1000 million roubles which the Siberian and the Manchurian Railway, opened in October 1902, have swallowed up, according to the quotations (*Nov. Vremja*) productive enterprises? They may have a stirring influence upon the production and the trade in those regions of Asia and thus be called productive. But their construction has laid upon the State 100 millions of new debts, the interest and principal of which must be paid, and the Tashkend line, although promising much in the future and therefore a far better enterprise than the Eastern Siberian lines, will add several hundred millions more. If Monsieur Witte continually points with pride to the fact of having built the Siberian Railway with his surplus and "ready money" this is a mere quibble, since this ready money and surplus consisted, and consists, in these very loans and subsists upon them. It is not to be expected that for a long time to come these lines will produce interest and principal themselves, and before this happens, from the point of view of the Russian tax-payer, these lines will not be looked upon as productive investments. Countries like England can expend large sums in enterprises which only promise interest say ten years hence; a Cape to Cairo Railway is an enterprise which no other State but England could undertake to-day. But what would even the English tax-payers say if this railway were

<sup>1</sup> *St Petersburg Gazette*, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Since the above was written further new railway lines have decided upon—Saratov-Astrakhan, Petersburg-Kiev.

built by the Government, not to say by the help of a State loan.

Elsewhere than in Russia industries are hard pressed. Even in Germany the great revival has been followed by a reaction. Everybody had rushed into the turmoil of the open market and worked to a great extent for export. The open market was restricted and the industries supplying it had to be reduced. And yet the world-market, although disturbed by war and the fear of war, has not in itself lost its vigour, and will revive again in better days. When export suffers the individual and the shareholder loses his interest and many a workman his wages. But German industries have risen by their own capital, not by foreign State loans. Moreover, every industry is only in so far an economically sound one as its principal pillars rest upon the home soil, as it has its chief market in the home country. Industries which principally work for export bring the country into economic dependence on foreign countries and will therefore always be dependent upon the fluctuations of foreign markets. This is the case in England and in Belgium. The German market has hitherto been strong enough to maintain the principal home industries, and it is to be hoped that this will continue to be the case. It would be a misfortune if German economic life were ever to become as dependent upon the prosperity of export industries as it is in England and Belgium. Taking into account that the industrial states of Europe and America have been working for years with such passionate ardour for the increase of industrial securities as has been the case during the last ten or fifteen years, one cannot be surprised that the open market gives out. In Germany alone there lay idle, in the autumn of 1901, 150 millions' worth of manufactures which found no purchaser. One cannot believe, much less hope or wish, that our industrial productiveness for export will continue to grow at the rate it has done for some time past. May we be preserved from becoming an industrial country in this sense of the word. Since our

industries are the outcome of our own means, not of foreign ones, as in Russia, no doubt single individuals are brought into difficulties. The country as a whole, however, will benefit by this stoppage.

Russia is differently situated ; she exports very few manufactures, and at the same time her home market is small. The Government made it its task to revive it by giving an impetus to the manufacture of an enormous amount of goods with its own and foreign money, and by opening, at the same time, a number of railway lines for the sale of these goods. This was done in such a hurry, so suddenly, that within a few years the demand for manufactures was overtaken by the supply. And here the home market, the prosperity of the people as a whole, came to a standstill—not, as is the case in Germany at present, the foreign market. Formerly the same aims had been followed, but more cautiously. After the agrarian reform of 1861 the Minister, Von Reutern, furthered trade and industries greatly. In the course of his office, 1862-79, he founded forty-five commercial and industrial banks and built more than 18,000 versts of railway without, however, burdening the State with any considerable debt. The forty-five banks were most useful in a country which was to turn from a state of barter to a financial system, and which had neither money nor banks. Now, in the new era one has to deal with hundreds of millions as compared with the millions of twenty years ago and yet has not created industries capable of competing with foreign imports and which might dispense with a high protective tariff. But this free competition is, according to the words of the Minister, the goal of Protection. The protective tariff is equivalent to the school in which the people are to be developed industrially. It certainly has produced, in a short time, an abundance of industrial activity which cannot again disappear without leaving some traces. The consumption of textiles and ironware has risen considerably, and will <sup>nably</sup> continue to do so, at least in the Western <sup>es.</sup> More than one half, according to other

accounts, even  $\frac{2}{3}$ rds, of the iron industries supply private consumers. One has to consider, however, that the Government and private railways together are the chief consumers of iron. Of Russian pig-iron in the year 1899 about  $\frac{3}{5}$ ths are said to have been used in railway construction, and only  $\frac{2}{5}$ ths by private consumers. A number of manufactures formerly supplied by foreign countries are now produced by Russia itself. Most of them still require, even now, a protective tariff, and the average opinion would be that hitherto production is inferior and too expensive. Nevertheless, the chief conditions of industrial labour as they have been created during these years will remain, even if a part of the enterprises are ruined. But so high a premium will have been paid for these that the national welfare must suffer and the purchasing power of industrial securities must fall still further. The outlay has been too great in this game and economically it has therefore been lost. The industrial decline is not a temporary low-water mark but a loss which cannot be retrieved.

We shall see in the following chapters that the production of raw material stands on just as insecure foundations as that of manufactures. If the export of raw material should decline the attempt will be made with the prevailing financial system to support the balance of trade by increased protection. The temptation will be to resort to the same means if at the close of 1903 no favourable commercial treaty has been concluded with Germany. The experiences from 1891 to 1894 have shown, however, that the advantage which a high protective tariff may perhaps bring to the industries is easily reduced by the disadvantage brought to agriculture. A country, the finances of which rest principally upon the export of raw material, must always be at a disadvantage compared to an industrial country whose manufactures it fights by tariffs. An agricultural country can much less bear a commercial policy than a manufacturing country. In the exchange of goods the agriculturalist is always face to face with the dis-

advantage that raw materials, on account of their weight and bulk, make great demands upon means of transit. It is true the Government gives some help as far as it controls means of transit, namely, by cheap railway tariffs. However, there is the disadvantage that the export carriages to a great extent have to make the return journey empty, because the import of raw material is small and manufactures do not fill the space required by corn or wood. The wear and tear of the rolling stock is thus increased as well as the cost of freight. In the ports the same state of affairs exists with regard to the shipping freights. If to this is added a high tariff, if by any chance competitive tariffs are imposed, and if, in consequence of this, import decreases more and more, ships laden with ballast come into the harbour, and consequently the freights rise, which have to be paid by the farming population and not by the manufacturers. This was the case in Russia at the time of the high protective tariff. At the beginning of the "nineties" most ships arrived with ballast because they could bring no import manufactures and the Russian corn had to make good the loss. The Russian agriculturalist did not only pay more than before for German machinery and English cotton, but received less for his corn than he would have received without the high duties. The import was brought down by the protective tariffs of Wyschnegradski by 100 million roubles; the export of raw materials increased by more than 3000 millions; but the departing ships found no return freight, and had to cover this loss by a higher price for the export. In Libau empty vessels arrived with 67 per cent. of the entire incoming tonnage; in the ports of the Black Sea and of the Sea of Azov before the higher tariff there arrived in the year 1883, vessels with 57 per cent. ballast; after the introduction of the high tariff in 1891 and 1893, in the year 1893, 77 per cent. in the year 1894, 80 per cent. The agriculturalists lost therefore approximately as much as the freight was increased, and what this means is shown by an account of the Bourse Committee of

Odessa of former days, which is given by a Russian industrial paper.<sup>1</sup> It says, "From 1st June 1884 to 1st August 1885, 480,000 roubles of gold have been taken in duties upon coal, but during the same period, upon 120 million poods of export corn,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles in freight have been paid more, or  $3\frac{1}{4}$  times as much as the amount of the duty." Without the duty upon coal these vessels would have brought more coal, therefore fewer vessels would have had to arrive empty, and consequently lower freights could have been charged for the export of corn. A part of this duty upon coal is paid by the agriculturalist. This example proves how easily too zealous a pursuit of fiscal interests may injure the interests of a country, and how cautiously a State, which depends upon the export of raw material, has to set to work in imposing tariffs if it is not to injure itself by exaggerated Protection.

Other States have in their days been in an economic position similar to that of Russia thirty years ago. France at the time of Colbert, Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both stood towards England's economic power as Russia stands to-day to the industrial countries of the West. Economic help was then given by Government protection but not with Government money. The revival, the impetus itself, came in Germany from the midst of the people, and was used by the leading powers for the reform of economic life. Men like Perthes, Frederick, List, Hansemann roused the slumbering powers of the people and the Government had to follow their lead, not *vice versa*, as in Russia to-day. List has worked in Germany for railways and protective tariffs in a way similar to Wyschnegradski and Witte in Russia; but List worked with material means which were already existent in the country and had only to be put into motion; Russia works with sums which burden the people with a large "gold tribute" payable abroad. List found a people well-prepared for industrial labour and the consumption of manufactures, in Russia both these were

<sup>1</sup> "Promyschlenni Mir," *The Industrial World*.

lacking. Germany proceeded slowly and cautiously towards Protection in order to gradually help the growth of manufactures; in Russia an industrial fever was produced without regard to the strength of the people. In Germany neither high politics nor colonies had to be paid for; in Russia every year many hundred millions are spent upon the maintenance of her position as a first-class power and upon the development of the colonies. And finally, and this is the most important point, the men for these stupendous tasks are nowhere to be found.

During these ten years a noble edifice, or more correctly an additional storey, has been set upon the old walls of Russian economic life, with all the skill, with all the technique, with all the perfection of our times. Nevertheless, there have been heard ominous crackings in the new edifice, and many a rent has appeared—it seems as though those old foundations were unable to bear the modern edifice. If the home market should continue to give out, if the Russian consumer should not be in a position to use the products of the new industries, then two very clever and very energetic Ministers have made a great mistake. We will now endeavour to obtain light upon this subject.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CENTRE. THE NOBILITY

THE perusal of the preceding chapter impresses upon us the fact that in the new era from 1887 political economy in Russia has become more and more divided from national economy. The finances of the State absorb more and more the attention and activity of the two Financial Ministers of this period ; they gain pre-ponderance over national economy. Even whilst promoting economic labour amongst the people, such as industries, the Minister's point of view is always a financial one : the means at the disposal of the State must above all be increased. The first question is not how the prosperity of the people is to be increased, but in how far the Exchequer will profit thereby. Financial technique is the chief administrative aim, and certainly this has been brilliant since the year 1887. How absolutely Monsieur Witte looked upon this as his great task, how permeated he was by the conviction that a flourishing Exchequer is a convincing proof of growing national prosperity he has often declared himself. In his Budget Report for 1896 he described the financial successes as more splendid than they had ever been before or since, either in Russia or elsewhere ; they had all the signs of continuity ; they had in no case been co-existent with national impoverishment, and would be impossible if the industrial life of the nation were in a state of depression. He thought he saw tokens of the increasing well-being of the people, that from amongst the peasants there was emerging a well-to-do class of country people who

carried in themselves the possibilities of further development. This confidence in the power of finances is even apparent in the Ministerial reports upon the last two lean years. It is, however, not improbable that so thoughtful a man as Monsieur Witte should have remained quite untaught by the experiences of this period and by the warnings given on all sides.

In reviewing the Russian literature of the last twenty years one is surprised to meet always and everywhere with descriptions or observations upon the economic, social and moral defects in the life of the people. From the days of Gogol to those of Gorki so-called "*Belles-lettres*" have chiefly dealt with these subjects, and always critically, negatively, plaintively. Neither this branch of literature, nor that dealing with these subjects from a scientific standpoint have been positively constructive, and this is explained by the fact that the people themselves, at least until 1864, were excluded from all active participation in public affairs. To them was left the part of spectators and critics in a drama played by the State officials. I shall have occasion to again refer to this branch of literature. Here I only wish to draw attention to the scientific writings which have been on the increase lately, and which, apart from official publications, deal with the various phases of national life, and all of which are in direct contrast with the optimistic views of the Financial Minister and with the entire trend of home politics. It is more especially books on national economy which demand our attention. Whoever you take up, Keussler, Engelmann, Golowin, Schwanebach, Nawkow, Issajew, Lochtin, Simkowitsch, Jermolow, Milükow, etc., through them all, and more especially pronounced in the works of those of Russian nationality, run the same deeply plaintive tone, the expressions of disappointment, of sorrow about the present, and too often also of bitterness at the impotence of the individuals in a world full of evils. Only literary foreigners, who fly through the country after manner of commercial travellers, sometimes chance

to be of another opinion. One must, moreover, remember how cautiously the daily Press is obliged to steer clear of the Censor wherever internal conditions are under discussion. Perhaps not a tenth part of what weighs upon the heart of the writer is expressed. Yet cries of despair do break through now and then. All these investigations and plaints refer less to Russia as a whole than to the so-called Centre, Russia proper—yea, one may say to the old Grand Duchy of Moscow—to the exclusion of Siberia. They are the regions in which black earth preponderates, undulating to the north, with the steppe to the south, a country which is unsurpassed as regards natural fertility, and which in extent far exceeds Germany. The so-called Central Russia comprises 338,000 square kilometres<sup>1</sup> with 14½ million inhabitants, but shows to-day the same economic phenomena, the same state of civilisation, as the district of the Volga in the East. These two regions together form Central Great Russia, a country of 923,000 square kilometres with 25½ million inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> This was the national stronghold from which the spirit and character of the gigantic Empire received their imprint, on the strength of which the future of Russia and of the Russian depends. This country borders on the south on the Great Russian "New Russia," and in the south-west on "Small Russia," both of which, differing in many respects from the Centre, suffer much less economically but yet have a share in the development of the Centre, to which they are related both by the nature of their soil and their nationality. These two last-named districts, immense, woodless plains of great fertility, comprise 633,800 square kilometres with 19,300,000 inhabitants. Let us follow trustworthy guides through some of the chambers of this Russian stronghold.

Before 1861 the organisation of social and economic

<sup>1</sup> 1 kilometre =  $\frac{5}{8}$  of a mile (English).

<sup>2</sup> Kowalewski, *La Russie à la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> Siècle*. Paris, 1900.

conditions was very primitive. The State, through its officials, demanded taxes and recruits, it administered the higher courts of justice and of police, and saw to it that law and order reigned in the land. The real power of administration was vested in the hands of the landed nobility, who governed less their estates than the peasants living upon them, these latter as their serfs, being bound to the soil and completely in their power. Surrounded by numerous retainers the nobleman lived on his estates and kept the peasant at work in the fields, a labour in itself of the most primitive kind and carried on with the most wretched implements. The master lived, without any other agricultural knowledge than that possessed by the peasant himself, in the simplicity consistent with an easy existence upon large estates, with an abundance of simple fare, such as bread and butter, meats and vegetables, kvass, mead and brandy, game and fish, with the addition of wool and linen for clothing. In the house the maids sat at the spinning-wheel, the wives at the weaving-stool, on the richer estates there being also lacemakers and embroideresses; there were studs, gardens and parks; there they rode to the hunt with the packs or went out coursing. They knew how to feed well, for the richer nobility thought more of the thorough education of their three or four cooks than of their own, and the good culinary traditions have withstood all the storms and stresses of modern days. The cost of all this did not amount to much, since both cooks and kitchen required no money, and consequently nobody troubled much about it. Of course you learnt little or nothing; people in those days were content with the very scanty education to be obtained in the "Gymnasium" of the provincial town, and very little knowledge was required for entering the military service. Whoever required more went to St Petersburg into the Lyceum or the "Junkerschool." Nobody studied agriculture, for the peasant scratched the soil in the spring with his wooden plough as had been his wont from times immemorial, sowed without

manuring, and harvested the wheat in the autumn and the aftermath in the next year, and then the land lay fallow ; cattle, horses and sheep always found sufficient pasturage on the virgin steppe rich in grass, or took their feed of hay in the slightly-built winter sheds, sometimes even under a roof only ; the cows gave little milk, it is true, but then their large numbers made up for this. What was there to be learnt ? The nobleman was, as Terpigorew says, police inspector, not an agriculturist. The bailiff had only to see that no peasant played the truant, that everyone was at his place according to orders—to-day on foot, to-morrow with a horse and cart ; to-day alone, to-morrow with wife and child. In the village he had to see that the huts were repaired, that the taxes were paid, and, if necessary, the nobleman himself had to step in and put an end to a quarrel, or give a marriageable girl in marriage, or wield the knout in punishment for a misdeed—which, by-the-bye, was always done in the horse stable—or even put someone into irons and send him to Siberia, or sell this or that ne'er-do-well. What learning did all this require ? No one was overburdened with cares. The peasant paid his tax, the master his brandy excise, and beyond this there was not much to be taxed, unless the nobleman went into the provincial capital to buy a Paris dress or a Persian carpet, or some champagne from a publican, and thus paid an indirect duty. Mortgage debts there were few or none, and the few only existed since the “Council of Trustees” established by the State had, a short time before, given credit to the nobility. There were no courts to administer justice to the peasant or citizen and to cost money ; if necessary, the police could be put into a good humour by the present of a few geese, fishes, a horse, or a cask of brandy. The higher officials in the province, by the way, mostly belonged to “us,” to the nobility of the province, and were not cruel. What then was the good of saving or of worrying ?

Then came the year 1861 with its staggering 19th of February, on which date the peasants received their personal liberty, their allotment in the village, and their

share in the village commune. At first everybody was stupefied by this blow, and with good reason, for the nobility had in no way been prepared for it. Pray remember that hitherto the property of the nobleman was represented by peasants, not by land, if by property profitable possessions are understood. The peasant was productive, not the land, for whole square miles of the finest country in the Government of Samara or Simbirsk, even of Saratov, beyond the Volga, had no value in themselves ; they became valuable from the moment that the first peasant settled down upon them. The widow in Terpigorew's story makes her fortune by buying up men, women, girls, children, everybody she can lay hands on in the Government of Tambov, her home, and by sending them in chains into the desert or rather the Steppe of Samara, that they may work there in irons until they have settled down : making new land arable, building huts, and, above all, by having children—a task which nobody must delay, since every child increased the value of the land and every vagabond is good enough to marry a girl and to produce a family. There were endless tracts of land but no inhabitants upon them ; the ground was to be had for an old song, and the landed proprietor colonised by deportation. *Vice versa* they had perhaps little land but many peasants, and thus they possessed a fortune, for the peasants at any rate earned something ; they went as traders into the town, and of their profit they gave a share to their lord. Now, all of a sudden, the peasants were gone—they were free men ; the nobleman still possessed the land but no labourers ! True, the Government gave Redemption bonds ; the free peasant had to pay a sum of money for his land to his former master ; the Government now stood security for him, and gave the landed proprietor a saleable bill on the debt, which he could negotiate. But the peasant had only received about four acres of land per head, where formerly, as a serf, he cultivated six or eight acres for his master. How then was the master to cultivate these in order to obtain the

former profit? The sum he received in interest from the Treasury for the four acres of the peasant did not even cover the loss of the three acres which now lay fallow and which the self-same peasant had cultivated formerly. For at first the peasant hired himself out, but unwillingly, as a day labourer, and a hard task-master could get no hirelings. Moreover, the peasant had taken away his plough as well as his horse, and the estate was often left without implements and cattle. This really was a most difficult position; perhaps the horse was left but the labourer and the plough were gone. How were the fields to be tilled? The new property yonder in Samara, with its settlements, the mud huts of the deported peasants, without any farm buildings, had no longer any value; but even the family estate produced nothing more, because it was hardly cultivated at all; the number of fallow-lying fields increased. After two years the coachman left, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the spinners, the weavers, the embroideresses only stayed the two years the law obliged them to, and then took their departure. The estate was deserted, except for this or that old butler, cook or bailiff, who still clung to the family for sentimental reasons, if his master had happened to inspire them, otherwise he too went his way, to service in the town or to open a drink shop, a grocery, a smithy in the village—the poor nobleman was left wringing his hands in despair. He had been robbed of the property, the heritage of his father and forefathers—what was he to do now?

Gradually the stupefaction disappeared amongst the nobility as amongst the peasants. The latter had wakened from his liberty bout, and as he could not live upon the produce of his land he had to work for the nobleman. Thus began the first journeyings after work which have since acquired such large proportions. The nobleman accustomed himself with a sigh to the new way of living, which required money for wages, and which he had now to produce. The arable land had decreased; to make a profit by farming was even

more difficult than before, and many got into difficulties. Many also had obtained from the "Council of Trustees" the first loan upon mortgage, and though it was not large the interest upon it had to be paid. Then came the bills of redemption, money became obtainable. Suddenly a great excitement spread through the land. What had been received from the "Council of Trustees" had gone nobody knew where. Now it was said that with the altered state of affairs a new mode of living must begin. Some wished to introduce modern farming as it was prevalent abroad, in Germany and in France, where the landed proprietors made great profits upon their estates. This was to be introduced into the districts of Orel and Tambov. The landed proprietors took their bills of redemption to Moscow, went to the new German engine factory, and inquired what sort of machinery and implements would be required for agriculture after German fashion. Several loads of machinery and a few German workmen were taken home, all the neighbours were invited for a certain day: four horses were put before a heavy plough or a sowing machine, or even a threshing machine, which was set working. If good luck would have it, they actually did work, to the astonishment of the neighbours, and weeks passed before a wheel broke or the labourers declared that the plough was no good, then everything went into the shed, and there was an end of German methods of agriculture. The first attempts naturally had a sad end, considering the prevailing ignorance of modern farming methods, even when the dealer in the town, or the German foreman, who was perhaps a Mecklenburg "*stromer*" and had never seen a threshing machine, did not cheat them. What was certain was that the bills of redemption gradually disappeared.

Nothing more perfect on this subject can be read than the descriptions by Terpigorew<sup>1</sup> of the prevailing conditions after the liberation of the peasants. It is chaos, economic and moral chaos. For the nobility had not

<sup>1</sup> Terpigorew, *Decay*. St Petersburg (in Russian).

only been thrown entirely unprepared from a state of barter into that of monetary exchange, which they did not understand, but they were also morally equally incapable, owing to circumstances which required a strong will and much presence of mind to overcome. When he formerly received money for a horse sold in St Petersburg this was spent in champagne and festivities. For what other purpose should he have required money on his estates, unless it were as a miser or because he wished to purchase additional property? Now he had money which ran through his hands just as quickly as before, for he had not learnt to take thought for the morrow, or to think in money, but, on the contrary, to act the part of a grandee wherever he appeared; this had become a second nature to him through many generations of peasant serfdom, or may have been a national characteristic of the Slav, of the "open nature" of the Russian. And to this must be added that the Russian, whether peasant or nobleman, has no aptitude for agriculture. He is no farmer in the sense that we Germans understand it. He does not cling to the soil, but easily leaves it, in order to go into the town to enter private service.

Others, who had no opinion of modern methods of agriculture, thought the more of the good education of their children, which was to enable posterity to bring back the former prosperity of the family by entering the State service. They took their bonds of redemption, drove with them to St Petersburg or Moscow, and lived there as grandly and as comfortably as they had been accustomed to and considered consistent with their position. The sons were prepared for the "Crown Institutions," they learnt the chief things, that is to say, foreign languages and good manners; the daughters were polished by real or so-called governesses; the parents went into society, and soon the bonds of redemption had gone. They had to return home to their estates and turn into money anything they might still possess in order to help their promising son in his brilliant Government career, which, doubtless,

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was assured to him, considering his great gifts and promises. Then began the downward road. Somewhat later, when one landed proprietor in the country after another was ruined, the Government attempted to help. In spite of the experiences bought twice before it saw in the lack of money alone the cause of the troubles which overwhelmed the landed nobility. In the year 1874 the "Mutual Land Loan Association" was founded by the help of the State and under State control. This institution issued bank-notes at par, which could be purchased at 88, were convertible into metal, and which at first required an interest of not less than 7 to 8 per cent., but very soon 9 to 11 per cent., including the loss of capital of 12 per cent., caused by the low exchange. This "Golden Bank" ruined a number of landed proprietors until the State abolished it. Then the Government founded, in 1886 and 1894 respectively, the "Nobility Agrarian Bank" and the "Peasant Agrarian Bank." It caused the foundation of a number of private banks, in short, threw with a lavish hand the money which was to save the nobility into the country. But this nobility had not learned even then how to deal with money. They took what was offered them, often as a help, which the Czar, in their estimation, seemed bound to lend to his faithful and hard-pressed nobility; yea, they were often very indignant when the interest, not to mention repayment of the capital, was mooted, since the Czar could not possibly have had such a thought in his mind when he gave the money. For the rest they lived upon this loan for a few years, and some proprietors actually went in for modern, that is to say a more intensive, kind of agriculture, especially by growing beetroot for sugar; of these, however, there were few, and they were very rich people.

A new era began once more when railway construction on a large scale and the craze for industrial enterprises seized the capital. Then the cry in the provinces was, also: "we must obtain bank concessions, we must found joint-stock companies." Most of the

landed proprietors had never in their lives seen either a "share" or a factory, and had no notion whatever of the business which such enterprises entail. Soon, however, there appeared a brother on the scene, one who had been in Paris and had visited the Bourse a few times, or perhaps some other friend who had been at school with a Minister of Finances—who had sat on the same form with him only two places off—who could therefore not fail to obtain by the influence of this Minister the finest concessions and thus to found the most lucrative of enterprises. Speculation began, the requisite money was taken out of the new mortgage banks, railways were constructed, and the money disappeared; soon they were again in the old plight, for all these railways and enterprises were unsound at the core, partly by reason of ignorance or dishonesty, even more on account of carelessness.

It is estimated that in this way 150 millions were borrowed by the nobility upon the security of their estates, and then for the most part squandered through carelessness, ignorance, want of understanding, incredible lack of character and childish thoughtlessness. Since the beginning of the "seventies" in many districts a third of the nobility or more have disappeared from their estates, swept away by this much-praised financial system, which is supposed to indicate progress. One feels how Terpigorew's heart is bleeding when he speaks of one neighbour after another having to leave his property.

The economic revolution had not found everybody unprepared. Cold, calculating men, subordinate officials or merchants from the towns, or usurers who understood the signs of the times, cropped up. Terpigorew describes two such types; they reappear in all his stories. The one robs the peasant, the other the nobleman; the one takes away the horse, the cow, the next year's harvest from the peasant, by loans at usurious rates of interest, the other purchases, at a price fixed by himself, the nobleman's horses, his farm buildings, then the park, the orchard, the furniture of the

manor house, finally the house itself. Everything is carried off. The ancient oak-panelled walls of the house are taken to pieces and put together again in the town; the furniture is carried thither, and thus the old estate has disappeared into the district or Government capital, together with its former owner. But in this house there now lives the usurer, and the nobleman has gone a-begging for some small situation somewhere in the neighbourhood of Smolensk or of St Petersburg, or he has become a drunkard and come down in the world, or he has disappeared nobody knows whither. Upon the old estate everything is deserted: the old limes in the avenues, the grand trees in the park, all have gone; the fields are let out piece-meal every year to the peasants in the village, the paddocks are let, the forest is cut down and sold. Hundreds, yea, thousands of properties are in this condition now, not only near Tambov, Orel, Tula, etc., but also in the vicinity of Moscow.

In reading these descriptions one fancies that children are being spoken of. So little thoughtfulness, so little firmness, so little experience, so little worldly wisdom, so little self-respect and so much confidence, soft-heartedness, carelessness, so easy-going, so self-indulgent, so long-suffering towards others—they are like children who have scarcely left school; their thoughts do not reach beyond the next month, the next week, they have never learned even to think of economy, to reckon with it, much less with political economy. A surprising lack of strength of mind, of practical common sense which it is scarcely possible to comprehend. If this should be the character, the national character of the people? It would well-nigh seem impossible in that case for them ever to reach a state of independence.

Meanwhile, the Government of Alexander II. had made the first attempt to train the people to activity and independence. It had called to life the Provincial Assembly, and had organised the first attempts at justice properly so-called. To the nobility these two

fields of useful and lucrative labour had been thrown open since 1863 and 1864, and they crowded by preference into the posts which the provinces offered, and for which no special study such as law was required. This was during the first days of horror after the abolition of serfdom. By their office of peace-makers, which pertained to the nobility and regulated the relations between the peasants and their former bondsmasters, they had obtained important influence upon the peasants in the village, and also upon the few peasant representatives in the Provincial Assembly. When subsequently this office was abolished their influence also vanished, and another element began to rise, which really learnt to work, but which watered the stock of benefices for the nobility. This element became to the nobility what the village usurer, the "fist," was to the peasant. It exploited the childish, easy-going nobleman, enriched itself through his forests, houses, parks, and obtained influence in the administration.

Thus the nobility found themselves face to face with a doubly antagonistic officialism, and soon were engaged in a quarrel with them on the field of self-government, which the Provincial Assembly had opened up to the nobility. As I have said before, this innovation fell into the time of the absolute prostration of the nobility, who, having become peasantless, and thus breadless, sought, after 1864, refuge from hunger and shame in the newly-instituted Provincial Assembly. All sorts of tasks had been handed over to the provinces which were connected with the expenditure of considerable sums of money. It was they who taxed the land, raised and spent the taxes for public purposes. Roads, hospitals, school-houses, granaries and bridges had to be built, and it was well-known, from past experience with the Crown buildings, Crown *entrepreneurs* and contractors, how money could be made out of these things. The Provincial Assemblies became the fields of speculators; the buildings were jerry-built, the roads neglected, and thus the state of affairs soon went from bad to worse. This brought the Government from

the very first into opposition to the provinces. Moreover, there was the natural aversion of the State official to any authority independent from himself which curtailed his power, and further, his bureaucratic jealousy of all representative independence. The governors obstructed, interfered, the provinces complained, and the quarrel gradually turned into a struggle between the principles of self-government and of State officialism. Finally there developed a political antagonism between the disciples of the old bureaucratic autocracy and the members of the Provincial Assembly elected by the votes of the "states," which aroused the suspicion that the latter were striving for political representation, by which the omnipotence of the Czar, *i.e.*, of the bureaucracy, ran the risk of being restricted. The Church immediately took its stand by the side of the bureaucratic defenders of absolutism, and from that moment the struggle of principles had an issue dangerous to the province, as we shall see in another chapter.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NOBILITY (*continued*)

THE landed nobility proved themselves to be incapable, after the abolition of serfdom, of settling down to the new state of things and of taking up agriculture again on a new basis upon their estates. But this alone cannot have been the reason why the whole country became impoverished. Into the place vacated by the impoverished nobleman other proprietors stepped ; the old fields were farmed by these or let out to peasants, and the profits benefited the new usufructuary. We shall inquire further on for the reasons of this decline of the peasant ; now we must keep in view the large private estates which comprise more than one-third of the cultivated land in private possession.<sup>1</sup>

The landed proprietor of olden times grew very little corn upon his large plains. Why should he? It was difficult to sell in good years, and had very little cash value even in bad ones. Fifty years ago a bushel of oats yonder in the Centre only fetched 15 kopecks, or 3d. ; the bushel of wheat double that amount, and even then it was often difficult to find a purchaser. When the harvest was brought in, the corn-stacks stood in long rows close to the furrows and the nearest stack was thrashed out, and so on in turn as they were required. If the year had been good the next harvest found a part of these old stacks still unthrashed ; new heaps were added to the old ones, and if no accident happened the unthrashed stacks were to be found even after three or even four years. It was

<sup>1</sup> Lochtin, *Condition of Agriculture in Russia*. St Petersburg, 1901.

the pride of the nobleman and of the peasant, a sign of wealth, when all along the road the new golden stacks shone, and behind them other grey and greyer ones, the oldest ones half rotten, of a dark colour. It is true many a bushel of corn was thus wasted, but it had its good points too. In a bad year it was difficult to get a living, but nobody suffered hunger, as everyone lived on the old stacks, the nobleman as well as the peasant, whom it was his advantage, if not his duty, to keep in good health. If a peasant in the village had harvested nothing, the master provided from the old stacks or the barn, and starvation was averted. If the field would not yield anything more it was left fallow and a new piece of land was ploughed on the Steppe or the Black Earth, for nobody thought of manufacturing. The best wheat probably went to Moscow, into the mills; where there were sheep farms wool was sold; by horse-breeding, too, some money was made; the taxes were low, the cash expenses were small.

After the emancipation of the peasant, however, troubles arose. First there was a lack of hands, then of money, and many perished on this account. Meanwhile, however, the network of railways was extending, and the prices of freight were so much reduced in the days of Wyschnegradski that it was possible to send wheat from the most distant fields (as long as the railway was not very far off, *i.e.*, not much more than 100 kilometres) to the towns, and even to the seaports, at a profit. Suddenly three times, even six times, the former prices were realised, and where, as formerly, in the district town only one or two dealers were found as purchasers, the ports from afar off made their magnetic attraction felt even in the villages beyond the Volga. Now the cultivation of corn increased. One piece of pasture-land after another was ploughed up, wheat-fields grew in numbers, quantities of machinery and of agricultural implements were brought from abroad, the production and export of corn rose within a few years to an incredible amount. The price of land rose and everybody believed in a golden future. To-

day the Steppe, celebrated in songs—the endless, flower-carpeted, mystic Steppe—is still to be found beyond the Asiatic frontier, beyond the Ural, but in old Russia it has almost entirely disappeared, and in its stead uninterrupted cornfields stretch out from Tula and Orel to the Black Sea, the Volga, and beyond. The earth is fertile enough to bear wheat during many consecutive years, or alternately rye, hemp and oats, with slight cultivation and without manuring; thus they sow and sow again, and these manor fields, mostly new land, bear even to-day eightfold in good years—twice as much as the fields of the peasant, or, at the very least, one third as much. The strength of the peasant's field has been drawn from the soil during centuries. The lord of the manor has more new land than the peasant, and for this reason alone better crops. Thus the destructive mode of farming which, since the blessed days of Rurik, had been in vogue in Russia was continued on a larger scale over the entire country, only in a far more destructive fashion. For even if before no one had thought of manuring, there was at least an abundance of cattle, horses, pigs, which inevitably brought manure to the land without much trouble on the part of man. The immense grassy plains fed the cattle and indirectly profited smaller stretches of arable land. Now, however, the grass plains disappeared, and with them the cattle. They have diminished by one-third in numbers as compared with twenty years ago, whilst in all the other countries of Europe they have increased, and even this may be too low an estimate. The quantities of hay grew less and less, and the few remaining cattle were fed wretchedly with straw, not only by the peasants but even upon most of the estates. Thus the strength of the soil was exhausted the more quickly the cultivated fields increased in numbers, and they expanded with the expanding railway. The harvest produced by the single acre was and remained poor, or became more so, but it was the number of cultivated acres which caused the numerous cornstacks to be built up along the high-road for the steam threshing machines, more than

there had ever been seen before. However, the stacks of varied colours were no longer, for scarcely was the harvest at an end when one began to thrash and to sell quickly, most of the masters' corn as well as all of the peasants'. The straw was left to rot somewhere or was used as fuel, and when a famine year came there was no provision. Horse studs and cattle farms decayed, sheep farms likewise, especially in the Central Governments, and lastly the climate also changed. The forests had gone, the grassy plains had disappeared, and with them the power to retain moisture; the cultivated fields rapidly evaporated the melting snow in the spring, the rains in summer and autumn, and dry years were on the increase.

Thus between 1870 and 1890 a number of fruitful years with a powerful increase in the corn production were followed by a time of decrease in the harvest and simultaneously in the price of corn. Scarcely had the famine years of 1891 and 1892 gone by, scarcely had the three following years brought plentiful harvests, when from 1894 the prices fell upon all the Corn Exchanges of the world. The favourable years had left very little capital from the sale of corn in the hands of the landed proprietor. In his easy-going fashion he had spent the money, had mortgaged his property with the Agrarian Banks, and very rarely saved anything. An exception must be made in favour of the beetroot-growers in the south-west and south, who, thanks to the protection of the Government, obtained very high profits from the sale of sugar at home and at the same time introduced upon their large estates scientific farming, at least upon part of their fields. There grew landed properties from which 200,000 to 300,000 bushels of wheat were reaped every year. But the forests became thinner and thinner in order to supply the factories with fuel.

Necessity, the uncertainty of obtaining hands, the lack of machinery, drove the landed proprietors into accepting appointments in the Government, the province, or the banks; their absence from their estates forced them to let out more and more of their fields to the peasants, mostly for one or two years. Of

course these estates were more thoroughly devastated than the communal fields; they were never spared, never manured, and thus yielded very soon just as little as the communal field, that is to say, three or fourfold. When the field did not yield more than had been sown it remained fallow. If one takes into account the fact that these estates, with the exception of a very few small ones, which were farmed upon scientific lines, or of the very great ones with beetroot cultivation, were worked at a very small profit only, or even at a loss, it will be understood why the estates of the nobility are dwindling away rapidly while the auctioneers' lists contain thousands of properties for sale. It will further be apparent that, on the whole, the transfer of the soil into other, commercial or peasants', hands does not arrest the course of impoverishment. The merchant only very rarely becomes a farmer himself by the purchase of an estate; his idea is to get a return for his money, and the estates are plundered, not cultivated. The peasant offers better prospects when he possesses the means for settling down on the land he has purchased. But this is rarely the case; he clings too much to his village life and to his property, and this clinging he even takes with him as a colonist. However, in recent times, amongst the younger generations, the capacity and love for continued and rational agricultural labour is more often met with. The number of young men of all classes is certainly on the increase who do not look upon Government service as the only possible career, and who settle down on the soil to hard work, but unfortunately these are still the exceptions.

The number of private landowners is not great; they are, as Lochtin thinks,<sup>1</sup> "Almost entirely occupied with Government or communal service, which offer adequate remuneration. For most land-owners agriculture is neither the chief nor the only means of existence. This has been so for a long time, since Peter I. rendered the nobility liable for service. Now-

<sup>1</sup> *Lochtin*, p. 309.

adays, however, the exodus from the country has become general ; you have to starve on your estate, for probably you are overwhelmed with debts, and it is so easy now to get to St Petersburg and so dull in the country without a retinue of servants and the cheerful social life with the neighbours, also because farming is so difficult. It is indeed difficult to pursue any rational sort of agriculture without tenant labourers or yearly hirelings. How can a farm prosper on which 50 to 200 labourers are required for cultivation in the spring and for the harvesting in the autumn, but which, during the remainder of the year, offers no sort of employment, so that labourers are only hired and paid for sowing and harvesting. The agent takes long journeys in the autumn in order to engage 200 labourers for the coming year, *i.e.*, for sowing and harvesting. He returns with 200 agreements correctly drawn up, and waits. Just before seed-time 100 labourers arrive instead of 200 and substitutes are not to be had. The 100 missing labourers have gone after higher pay elsewhere and to prosecute them is out of the question as it would lead to nothing. How is it possible under such circumstances to farm properly, considering that the master is never certain of his hands ? To be certain of them is only possible if, apart from the few weeks of seed-time and harvest, there is continual work to be found for them on the farm, in the field, on the meadow, or in the forest ; that is to say, it is only possible for a master who farms scientifically, who feeds cattle in the stables, who makes manure, grows clover, keeps roads and ditches in repair and has work to be done in the forest. Further, where are the hirelings to be obtained for these thousands of estates, even if they are farmed scientifically, since the majority of the peasants have farms of their own or a share in the communal property, that is to say, are landed proprietors themselves, who always return to their land after their peregrinations. The miserable condition of the peasants,

which no longer permits an increasing number of them  
to live by their share of land and forces them to seek

work elsewhere, just at the time of year when there is work to be done in the village as well as on the estate, renders it impossible. The peasant can only then find farm work when there is some to be done at home as well.

The conditions for a change to scientific farming are unfavourable, it is true, but the change must be made because, with the old method of cultivation, the field does not yield as much as the cultivation costs. Any other than the Russian nobility would probably have mastered the situation sooner. But here we have to deal with the character and customs of a class who seem to possess neither the will nor the capacity to bring any sort of rational order into agriculture by their own strength, or even with considerable help from the State. In reading the excellent book written by Engelhardt about twenty-five years ago one is amazed at the arrears of farming in those days, in regions which, like the Government of Smolensk, are nearer to the civilised world. But the kind of naive ignorance of even elementary agricultural rules and experiences is prevalent even to-day in all parts of the Russian Empire, may be read of daily in newspapers and reports, and not the least frequently in the publications and resolutions of Government Commissions, which have been formed in endless sequence by the Ministers in St Petersburg, in order to finally solve this great problem. True, even the peasant in Germany, or in France, is not in possession of great book knowledge on farming, but this does not prevent him from pursuing rational husbandry based on practical knowledge and inherited experience. In Russia both are lacking. How many estates have gone from Russian into German hands and have in a short time become well-organised and profitable. "Karl Karlowitsch" (as they are fond of calling the German immigrant), who had walked the street of the district town silently, with a pipe in his mouth, and who one fine day became proprietor of a nobleman's seat in the district, who set it in order in less than three years and is

now becoming a well-to-do man—Karl Karlowitsch is often laughed at, often envied, sometimes hated, but nobody thinks of imitating him, except in an unreasonable sort of way. On the other hand, a few young noblemen are sent to France, or even to England, at the expense of the State, in order to learn farming or cattle-breeding; thence they return with more knowledge but in practice quite useless. The thing that lies nearest is seldom done in Russia; what is remote and grand is undertaken by preference. Of course failure is the result.

It has been computed that the landed nobility have mortgaged their estates up to 20 per cent. of their value, and this would of course not be high in comparison with the landed properties in other countries. However, in the first place, the value of the land has been calculated according to the greatly-increased purchase prices, which were obtained in consequence of the rapid increase in the cultivation of corn and the high prices of the "seventies"; and secondly, the actual value of the estates has fallen since through exhaustion of the soil. Thus the mortgages are in effect heavier than would appear from the figures. To this must be added the fact that, apart from the cultivation of corn, only very few agricultural industries exist, unless sugar factories are counted. Since the Treasury has destroyed the smaller distilleries, which were useful to agriculture, and has built 400 factories for distilling purposes, this industry can scarcely be called an agricultural one any longer. Since, in the districts of the Black Earth, the meadows and pastures have disappeared even less has been done than before for improved and increased cattle-breeding. Whilst developing favourably in Finland, in the Baltic Provinces, in Poland, even in Siberia, cattle-breeding in Central Russia and the occupations connected with it, almost without exceptions, are in a wretched condition. Since the Steppe has disappeared the numerous private studs in the Central Governments have mostly disappeared also, and horse-breeding beyond the Volga,

in the Orenburg district, is no longer carried on. The growing of cereals alone is left to the farmer, who must at all costs have money in the autumn, who cannot obtain, year after year, by money and labour, good cattle, who either will not or cannot breed pigs. And whilst very little is done by the Government for such side industries, the differential tariffs are driving the corn to the ports and the landed proprietor to its cultivation, and thus to further exhaustion of the soil. These estate-fields comprised, in the year 1892, 29·6 million dessatins, and are said to have increased up to 1899 by about 3 million dessatins.<sup>1</sup> With every dessatin of new land the Steppe disappears; on the peasant properties it is no longer met with, and only on a few large estates in the south-east. With sorrow many a Russian thinks of the former poetical Steppe, which even in Trans-Caucasia is only to be found here and there. And recently a native from there (Nerutschew, in the St Petersburg *Viedomosti*) said, "The produce of the harvest has not increased by the extension of arable land, but rather decreased." Thus it becomes comprehensible why the landed property of the nobility has shrunk since the abolition of serfdom. Before 1861 the nobility possessed 105 million dessatins; after the emancipation of the peasants, 78 million dessatins. Of these there were only 57 millions left in 1892, and at the close of 1893 again one million less—that is to say, 56 million dessatins in the hands of the Nobility.<sup>2</sup> According to this it may be assumed that, in comparison with 1861, the estates of the nobility have decreased by more than one half. The land has passed into the hands of peasants, merchants, citizens.

<sup>1</sup> *Lochtin*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Milukow*, p. 189. The figures are based upon reports of the Nobility Agrarian Bank and can therefore only refer to the sphere of activity of this bank. Finland, the Baltic Provinces and Poland also belong to it.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PEASANT

ACCORDING to Lochtin, the arable land in the hands of the peasants in 1892 only amounted to 111 million dessatins, the actual cornfields to 74.3 million dessatins only.<sup>1</sup> If to these are added the endless tracts of land which are still untouched or half devastated in European as well as in Asiatic Russia, it is more than probable that the land could easily support 126 million inhabitants. In the same year the landed property, communal property and tenant farms,<sup>2</sup> is said to have amounted to 2 dessatins per head, 0.74 dessatins of which were under cultivation. The share of the former Crown tenant was greater, comprising about 9.88 acres. This calculation of 4.94 acres and less per head in Central Russia, which is quoted as being the rule by various authorities, was the result of repeated re-division such as the well-known Russian communal administration entails. It was, however, in the rich "Black Earth" district of the Centre that the share originally consisted only of 3 to 4 dessatins, and with good cultivation and more highly-developed town life this might have yielded sufficient food for one family. For a family of seven, which must be taken as the average in Russia, the peasant property amounted to 14 dessatins of land, and very fertile land too. But now this share of 14 dessatins is divided into at least three, often and frequently into more parts, and even then scattered over far outlying districts. These

<sup>1</sup> All these Russian statistical figures must not be relied upon as accurate, but only as approximately so, and even then with caution.

<sup>2</sup> *Lochtin*, p. 225.

divisions are often at a distance of as much as 20 kilometres from the village; they often consist of long narrow strips two furrows wide, for the ploughing of which the peasant sometimes requires a whole day. With his wretched horse it is impossible for him to plough properly a field which lies 10 or 20 kilometres distant from the village, much less manure it. He cannot cultivate in a manner differing from that of the majority of his neighbours the five or ten pieces of land, each only 10 or 20 feet broad and widely scattered one from the other; he must graze where and when the others do, and sow where and what they sow, else his seed will be trampled down and used as grazing ground by his neighbours, who sow later than he and who send their flocks to feed upon the fallow fields. In the district of Uglitsch, in the *gouvernement* of Jaroslav, which is not the precious Black Earth district, but, on the contrary, that of the poorer middle region, the property of the single peasant consists to-day on an average of thirty-six separate pieces, and in 12 per cent. of the village communes these strips are only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet in width.<sup>1</sup> Of course this has not always been the case, but has gradually become so owing to the growth of the population and the consequent re-divisions of the communal land. Thirty or forty years ago they might have been less scattered and broader, but with the increase in the numbers who laid claim to them the number of these fields also grew, although the field from which these strips were cut always remained the same. Between 1875 and 1895 the property of the peasants per head has, in spite of some acquisitions of land, greatly diminished. In the case of 1000 peasants of both sexes in the year 1895, as compared with 1875, a loss of property has to be noted, caused by the increase of the population and amounting to 20 per cent. in the Centre, 23 per cent. in the east, and 24 per cent. in the southern regions.<sup>2</sup> If the present system of communal ownership

<sup>1</sup> *St Petersburg Gazette*, 1901, No. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Polenow, *Examination of the Economic Position of the Central Black Earth Gouvernements*. Moscow, 1901, p. 13.

continues in vogue in the village the share of the villagers per head must go on decreasing. Moreover, the peasant has very few meadows and pastures as compared with the miserable fields. Lochtin calculates that of all the cultivated land owned by peasants in fifty provinces of the extent of about 111 million dessatins, 17 million dessatins are meadow land and 14 million dessatins pasturage. An extension of the fields within the communal land is difficult and is said to have taken place only to a very small extent (0.8 million dessatins between 1892 and 1899). The cultivation of clover is impossible on account of the communal ownership of land. The implements are wretched, the horses and cows of the most miserable description. Taking into consideration such conditions as these it is not surprising to hear (Lochtin) that from these 0.74 dessatins of cornfields on an average only 20.4 poods of corn are raised. Another investigator, Simkhowitsch,<sup>1</sup> quotes, as the minimum required for the food of the Russian peasant, 19 poods, and he has brought to light the following state of affairs: (in round numbers) 45½ million souls, or 70.7 per cent. of the entire peasant population, obtain from their share in the communal property less than 19 poods of corn per head; 13 million souls, or 20.4 per cent. of them, have less than 26.5 poods per head; and 5.7 million souls, or 8.9 per cent. of the peasants, have more than 26.5 poods per head. Taking 25.5 poods as the quantity which suffices for the food of the peasant, as well as of that of his cattle, Simkhowitsch comes to the truly startling conclusion that only 8.9 per cent. of the Russian peasants obtain enough from their fields to keep any cattle at all.

However little confidence one may have in such figures one may nevertheless assume that the share of most of the peasants in the most fertile part of the Empire does not to-day exceed 4.94 acres per head, or 98.8 acres per farm, and that the share of the former Crown farmers amounted to from 7.42 to 9.08 acres per

<sup>1</sup> *Communal Ownership of Land in Russia*. June, 1898, p. 292.

head. According to investigations recently made by Sering, in Silesia,<sup>1</sup> the peasants there only sell their corn when their fields reach the minimum size of 7·42 to 12·36 acres. These 7·42 to 12·36 acres of well-cultivated land yield to the peasant sufficient corn to supply his own wants, those of his family and of his cattle, and only the sixth hectar (2·5 acres), or of good land the fourth, yields anything for sale. In Russia we have had plenty of similar experiences in the villages of the German settlers. Yonder, in the flourishing colonies of Small Russia, the colonist only begins to consider his farm profitable when it comprises an area of 45 (121·50 acres) to 50 (140·40 acres) dessatins. A farm in Small Russia originally comprised 65 dessatins and has fallen to-day to 8 dessatins. Hence the decline of the Russian and the expansion of the German farmer in Small Russia. The gentleman farmer has of 14 hectares of land about 5·18 hectares under corn, which in Silesia would be quite sufficient. But this land has been so exhausted that it only bears three or fourfold. During the last forty years, according to Polenow, the fertility of the fields has diminished in the district of the Black Earth by one-third.<sup>2</sup> If one hears then that in spite of these facts the peasant is selling considerable quantities of corn one might be tempted to discredit altogether the reports of political economists. Yet, on the whole, these figures are quite correct. But how is this possible?

During the last ten years whole bookshelves full have been written, not in Russia alone but also in Germany, on Russian communal legislation, so that it is most superfluous to set forth here the defects of the communal ownership, of the repeated re-division of the fields, or of the guarantorship of the commune for the taxes. To continue to believe in this national idol, which has claimed and still claims countless human sacrifices in our own times, only the most narrow-minded Russian fanatic is capable of. However, there certainly

<sup>1</sup> *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, 1901, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Polenow*, p. 12.

still exist many of them, and the praise of this characteristically Russian and most promising (1) institution is still sung. The truth of the matter is that the private ownership of land by the peasant, originally universal, has been gradually done away with by the Government during the last 300 years, and that the guarantorship of the commune is merely a technical measure of the Government whereby easy and certain payment of the taxes is ensured. According to Simkhowitsch this guarantorship existed even before the communal ownership of land. The latter was enforced in North Russia as late as the "thirties" of the nineteenth century by treating the peasants who defended their property as rebels. The communal ownership of land has, until quite recently, been protected by the Government, for a law of 14th December 1893 decrees that the withdrawal from a share in communal land, and its transfer to a private owner, as it was permitted under certain conditions (repayment of the redemption money), according to the original law of 1861, were to be dependent on the consent of the commune and on the ratification by the Ministers of the Interior and of Finance. Since it is the well-to-do and industrious peasant who can and will separate in this manner from the commune, the best tax-payers of the commune, which has to guarantee their payment, would thus escape. On this account their consent to this withdrawal is always withheld. The ambitious peasant can thus never hope to acquire his share and in anticipation cultivate it more carefully than his neighbours. He has to go on being guarantor for his lazy neighbour who cannot pay his taxes; he must go on exhausting his land as his neighbour does his, for a few years hence this same lazy neighbour may be squatting upon the land of the industrious peasant and the latter receive in exchange the lazy neighbour's portion.

In spite of the tendency adhered to by the Government until quite recently, to uphold this maddest of all agrarian institutions, signs are not wanting that it

is decaying internally, falling to pieces of itself. Since the rich are not allowed to throw off their fetters it is the poor who do so.

The commune, with its communal ownership of land, originating as it does in a most practical although equally arbitrary motive, has, in the confused mind of the nationalist, acquired the ideal glory of socialistic equality. All peasants in the commune are supposed to remain equal on account of their equal share of property. As everywhere so here human nature has allowed itself to be cajoled for a long time by the ideal of equality and has very soon taken good care to establish inequality. It was not long before there were to be found in every village richer and poorer people, the aim of the richer being exclusively that of becoming richer still by making the poorer ones still poorer. This most human endeavour, combined with the progressive dwindling of the shares of land through the repeated re-divisions, robbed an ever-increasing number of peasants of their horse, their cow, their implements, and drove them to making a living as hirelings in addition to that resulting from the cultivation of their fields, and finally without the field at all, simply as day labourers in the village or in the town. This resulted in what scientific men call to-day the differentiation of the peasant class. The Kulak, the "fist," was the peasant who, making use of the necessity of his neighbours, turned one after another first into his debtor and then into his servant, who got hold of their share of land somehow and let them cultivate it on his account. He bears the same relationship to the peasant as does the small usurious official or dealer to the nobility, who gradually eats up land, house, park, everything, and finally drives the nobleman away in a far more helpless condition than that in which the peasant finds himself, who, driven away by the "fist," has his hands at least with which to earn his bread. He also resembles the nobility of the Middle Ages, who first protected the peasant, the poorer nobleman, or the artisan, just as

the usurer is wont to appear as a benefactor in his monetary dealings with the peasantry, out of which protective relationship there gradually developed, in the easiest manner possible, serfdom, bondage, vassalage. What a cry was raised twenty or thirty years ago when this type of Kulak, the village usurer, first made his appearance, who later, when his successful work was better known, was given the name of "village devourer." In him seemed to be incarnate the enemy of the inviolate national sanctuary, the village commune, and he was fought by fair means and foul. But he could not be crushed, for he had his *raison d'être* in human nature, which you may control by laws but cannot altogether change. The more the share of the peasant diminishes by repeated re-divisions the more he is obliged to seek a livelihood beyond the village; the smaller the yield of the field, and the more severe and frequent the famines, the more easily, of course, the share of the poor falls into the hands of the rich, the lower becomes the price of land, the more difficult is it for the communal assembly to raise the  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the votes required to drive away the rich by a new division from the property obtained by usury or by a fall in the price of land. Thus, even at the end of the "eighties," in twenty-two Russian *gouvernements* 13 per cent.<sup>1</sup> of all farms were without any cattle, and the horse census of 1882 showed 1,100,000 of the farms to be without teams.<sup>2</sup> Within the last ten years there disappeared in thirteen *gouvernements* of the Centre and of the east (Black Earth district) 185,100 farms with teams, and the number of horses diminished by 1,393,400, *i.e.*, by 21 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the east, and by, roughly, 29 per cent. in the central Black Earth district.<sup>3</sup> In exact proportion also the number of teamless farms increased, for there the peasant does not plough with oxen or cows, but only with horses. It is evident then

<sup>1</sup> I mean Russians by nationality in contradistinction to Russia as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Simkhowitsch, p. 316.  
<sup>3</sup> now, p. 17

that the proprietors could not cultivate the fields without horses. But it is equally certain that they did not therefore remain uncultivated. The inference is obvious that these fields were rented by the richer peasants or acquired by them by some means or other, and cultivated with *their* teams. The million tenant-farmers had turned into a million country or town day-labourers. This process of slow spoliation of the poorer peasant by the village "devourer" is going on steadily, and is only checked by the endeavour of the teamless peasant to cultivate his land by means of hirelings and to earn the money required for this purpose by other work. Thus, about the year 1891,<sup>1</sup> 915,140 farms were visited in the five *gouvernements* of the Black Earth, *i.e.*, Tschernigow, Voronezh, Poltava, Saratov, Kursk, and it was found that of these 25·1 per cent. were without yoke-animals, 25·3 per cent. had one head each, and 49·6 per cent. had two or more head apiece. In sixteen *gouvernements* of the east and south the number of farms without teams rose from 1882 to 1891 by 3·6 per cent., and if this census were repeated to-day in these same *gouvernements*, which within the last ten years have been visited by famines, no doubt a far greater decline would become apparent. "In New Russia," says Golowin, "where communal property mostly exists on paper only, and where the duty of a guarantor is merely nominal, existence has placed no sort of check upon the natural growth of the more prosperous farms. They acquired normal dimensions by the purchase of land from private owners and by the renting of shares from those neighbouring peasants whose farming was not productive."<sup>2</sup>

By many people a decided hindrance to the abolition of the communal ownership of land is seen in the fact that the villages would have to be sub-divided and the communal land be given away in single farms, which would entail enormous expenses. This, of course, is not

<sup>1</sup> Hurwitz, *The Economic Position of the Russian Village*. New York, 1892. English. Compare Simkhowitsch, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Golowin, p. 93.

to be thought of, and it is not in the least necessary either. In the whole of Europe village settlements preponderate—single holdings are rare. The lack of water alone would make the immigration of the peasants into single farms impossible. But the Kulak indicates the right method: “give freedom of soil and the individual possession based on personal interest will make room for itself.” Thousands of poorer farms will disappear, but the peasant class, as a whole, will be strengthened; in the over-populated villages the farms will decrease in number, but those that remain will be better cultivated and more prosperous. Communal ownership encourages evil propensities: laziness, carelessness, mismanagement; it suppresses good qualities: industry, economy, love of agriculture and love of work. This fetter therefore must first disappear; then agrarian development, artificially and arbitrarily checked, will resume its natural course and lead to convalescence. If the fetters of the law with regard to communal ownership were removed a class of peasant proprietors would speedily arise, and these might possibly arrest the general decline. However, this development of a peasant aristocracy also is kept in check by the guarantorship, which takes from the industrious peasant what the impoverished one can no longer pay in taxes, and thus militates against the accumulation of property. For the taxation of the peasant is high in proportion to his income. A Russian agrarian statistician<sup>1</sup> calculated that “the entire taxation of the landed property of the peasants, including duties payable to the State, exceeded the gross profits in the year 1885 by 20 to 27 per cent. and in the year 1890 by 62 to 69 per cent. He declares that the former serfs in the thirty-seven *gouvernements* not only do not keep anything for themselves of the net profit on their land, but have to pay away 198·25 per cent., that is to say, almost double the net profit, in taxes to the State, and that the better-situated

<sup>1</sup> *Nikolai on Political Economy in Russia*. Munich, 1899, pp. 2, 171.

Crown and appanage peasants have to pay 92·75 per cent. of their net profit, and thus retain 7·25 per cent. for themselves. True, it must be mentioned that in these taxes has been included the repayment of capital for the purchased land, the so-called Land-Purchase Instalments. Although this professor quotes official sources it is doubtful whether the above ratio can hold good as an average, as if so, the peasant who possessed more than 14 dessatins of land would be ruined the more certainly the more he possessed. All accounts, however, point to an over-taxation of the peasant. A less learned but more experienced authority as regards the condition of peasants, the Rural Captain, Nowikow<sup>1</sup> says, that in the Black Earth district the taxes for each soul, that is to say per head of the existing male population, ground tax, amortisation instalments and rural communal rates, amount to from 7 to 8 roubles per annum, *i.e.*, 3 to 4 roubles per dessatin, which would be about one half of the rent paid for the land. On the poorer soil of the industrial and the lake regions the land often cannot pay these taxes, which are thus changed into a poll-tax. The peasant would often willingly renounce his share in the land. If one realises the wretched cultivation of the fields, the exhausted condition of the land which for centuries past has remained without manure, it must be confessed that the abolition of the former poll-tax has not saved the peasant from being subject to another and heavier kind of poll-tax. In the townless districts any other source of profit is rare, and only to be met with at a great distance from the village, since home industries have been destroyed by factories. But the peasant wanders off in search of this; he thinks nothing of walking a hundred miles, or of travelling by railway over hundreds of miles, in order to save during the summer 20, 30, often only 10 or 12 roubles; then he goes home in the autumn and the taxes are collected. This is the task of a long line of officials, the chief of the district police and his assistants, rural captains, tax-

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches of a Rural Captain.* St Petersburg, 1899, p. 49.

inspectors, district council officials, etc.; all these are anxious about the taxes and have their hands more or less on, or even *in*, the pocket of the peasant. The principle work, however, is done by the police-inspector with the commune elders dependent on him, and it is easy to believe Monsieur Nowikow when he says that the time of the payment of taxes is the most important time of the year for the peasant. Even here, on the first rung of the ladder of administrative activity, the eternal defects of the purely bureaucratic *régime* are vividly apparent. Tyranny and bribery in milder forms, it is true, than existed a hundred years ago, are still to be met with, nevertheless, at every turn; sometimes in the form of a glass of brandy with which the peasant comforts the commune elder, sometimes in that of a bribe which the elder pays to the country policeman; in addition to this there is the pressure which the brainless uniformity of bureaucratic mechanism ever entails. Corn prices are low in September, but the peasant must sell what was threshed only yesterday, sometimes even his entire harvest, in order to pay the taxes and arrears of taxation; or perhaps tobacco is grown in the village and sent to market in November. But long before November the commune elder has been punished three or four times by the police-inspector on account of the delayed payment of taxes. For what matters it to the police whether the village grow tobacco or catch fish? From the White Sea to the Black Sea the taxes must be paid on a certain day, no matter whether the peasant is in a position to do so or not. Thus the law requires it.

In spite of all *uradniks* (country policemen), police inspectors, etc., they do not succeed in collecting the taxes everywhere, and arrears make their appearance. Sale by auction of his last remnant of property is threatened; the peasant borrows money or sells what is necessary. Whoever would lend the peasant money at 30 per cent. would, at that time of the year, be a benefactor, says Nowikow. And yet the arrears are increasing every year, more especially in the so-called

Centre—in Great Russia. Schwanebach affirms that about the middle of 1893 the arrears of the peasants in forty-six *gouvernements* amounted to no less than 119½ million roubles, of which amount 110 millions fell to the share of the Centre. He further adds: "Almost in all the central and eastern *gouvernements* the arrears exceeded the yearly estimates, and in some—Ufa, Kasan, Orenburg, Samara—even by twice or three times the amount." For the year 1896 Issajew<sup>1</sup> gives 142½ millions as the correct figure, although a year before but eight millions were remitted. Taken separately the arrears in the *gouvernement* of Voronezh amounted to 164 per cent. of the estimates; in that of Novgorod, 306 per cent.; in Kasan, 355 per cent.; Samara, 342 per cents. and Orenburg, 492 per cent. Besides these there weighs upon the peasants from former bad years a considerable money debt given in the shape of grants. And these figures refer to the year before the famine of 1897-98, which hit these *gouvernements* very hard. The consequence has been that the arrears of land purchase instalments amounted, on the 2nd January 1901, to no less than 250 million roubles. What state of affairs has been, and still is, prevalent since that famine year has been graphically, and, I believe, correctly, described by Messrs Lehmann and Parvus.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to all this there is the great financial policy, inaugurated by Wyschnegradski and continued by his successors to this day, consisting in the pressure of the Government upon the taxable agriculturist with the purpose of increasing the export of corn. Scarcely has the harvest been brought in when the collection of taxes begins and forces the peasant to sell his corn immediately. He reaps, as we have seen, less than he requires for himself, but he must sell even this at any price, and thus starvation begins in the autumn. And the cheaper the corn in the markets of the world the more the peasant has to sell in order to make up the amount required for the taxes, even of what he may have

<sup>1</sup> *Policy of the Russian Ministry of Finance*. Stuttgart, 1898, p. 7.  
<sup>2</sup> *Famished Russia*.

reaped upon rented or purchased land. Thus, prices were high in the bad years of 1891-1892, but the famished peasants had no corn ; then they fell, as for instance in the *gouvernement* of Samara, in the year 1894, to 3 to 5 shillings the cwt. of wheat, and to about 1·17 to 2·27 shillings the cwt. of rye. In 1895 prices were lower still. In the *gouvernement* of Poltava, for instance, barley was at 9 kopecks per pood ; and on the Volga the pood of corn was paid for with 11 to 19 kopecks. The prices began to rise once more in 1896. But the cheaper the corn the more had to be exported, and *was* exported, because the balance of trade had to be maintained and the gold reserve increased. In the year 1864 Russia exported of corn  $9\frac{1}{2}$  million tschets' worth, or about  $121\frac{1}{2}$  million poods, to the value of 54·7 million roubles, *i.e.*, 33 per cent. of the whole export. Between 1882 and 1887 on an average 312 million poods were exported annually ; then followed, under Wyschnegradski, the artificially inflated exports, which averaged 441·8 million poods until 1891, and under Monsieur Witte, until 1897, 522·8 million poods. The fact is that one fourth of the entire yield of the Empire was exported.<sup>1</sup> Of this the peasant supplied 350 million poods (Golowin), therefore more than one half, although he in reality had nothing to sell. The farmer reaped on an average in the whole Empire (with the exception of Poland and of Finland) only 29·3 poods of corn and potatoes (in flour) per head of the agricultural population.<sup>2</sup> At the bottom of this there is the tax-collector, who sees to the "whipping up of corn" in the autumn to the welfare of the ministerial and to the detriment of the peasants' accounts. For later on the peasant has to rebuy his bread stuff at an enhanced price, and in the spring pay more highly even for his seed corn.

<sup>1</sup> *Schwanebach*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Lochtin, even amongst Polish economists, a juggler in figures. If he should have rated too low the harvest of the Russian peasant he has, on the other hand, calculated it too high for the Russian peasant of the Centre, as he has included the peasant of the Baltic Provinces, who live under totally different conditions, *i.e.*, who have enough

<sup>1</sup> and are able to bear an occasional failure of crops.

Thus Lochtin arrives at the following result: that in 50 *gouvernements* of European Russia there are harvested per head of the entire population, on an average, of food stuffs (including potatoes), 22·4 poods a year, of which 3·6 poods are exported, and therefore only 18·8 poods remain for the requirements of the peasants, which is less than is required in any other civilised state for the population. We have seen already that the peasant without an estate harvests less than these 29·3 poods, *i.e.*, of his 0·74 dessatins of cultivated field only 2·4 poods. Naturally, under these circumstances, he is unable to make any provision for bad years; but even the landed proprietor is prevented from this for the reason that in years with low prices no corn can be stored but all the more has to be sold. In the years 1894 and 1895, when the prices fell, the Russian corn export immediately rose from 404 million poods in the year 1893 to 639·5 millions in the year 1894 and 574·7 million poods in the year 1895.<sup>1</sup> And how incapable the land is in consequence of the lack of working capital to keep back the corn is shown by the circumstance that the export diminishes scarcely or not at all during the famine years, until the stores of former years are exhausted. Thus the export fell in the famine year 1891 by only 27·2 million poods.

The same phenomenon appeared during the bad harvest of 1897. During the last six months of 1897, 233·3 million poods more of corn were exported than in the preceding good years, and in the following first six months of 1898, 241·3 million poods were exported, which is again more than in the preceding year. In 1901 the failure of crops was looked upon as a certainty after July in a great part of Russia, and even officially recognised. The ministerial Budget Report gives the entire harvest of corn for 1901 as 3050 million poods, and the decrease upon the average of the last five years as 236 million poods. This deficit comprises almost half of the average export of corn. Yet the export of corn is shown in the following figures, which comprise

<sup>1</sup> *Schwanenbach*, p. 95.

the first eleven months of each year : 1899, 323,866,000 poods ; 1900, 395,691,000 poods ; 1901, 428,300,000 poods. In spite of the failure of the harvest, therefore more than before is exported. "If," so says Schwanebach, speaking of the bad harvest of 1897 (p. 103), "the movement of our corn were regulated by our consumption the surplus of the South-West (where the harvest had been good) would have taken the direction towards the central (necessitous) *gouvernements* in order to help them. But the centrifugal force remained at work, and the export of corn from Kiev and Podolia to Austria reached such proportions that the Austrian railways were not able to cope with the demands made upon their rolling stock." One of their newspapers came to the conclusion that "however small the harvest in Russia may be the markets of the world will always take from thence as much corn as they require if only the export is not restricted by artificial measures. This is easily understood : wealthy Europe outbids without difficulty the poor home purchaser." To this must be added that at the time of the compulsory feverish export in the autumn the local price of corn is wont to fall, and only to rise again in the spring when the peasant has to purchase.

Thus more corn is sold abroad than the people can spare if they are to be nourished sufficiently ; the greater part of the people, and especially the greater part of the Russian people, properly speaking, are in a chronic state of semi-starvation, to the profit of the Exchequer, and the reason is that they are too poor to keep their bread themselves or to buy any during bad years. If the above-quoted figures of about 18-19 poods of corn per head which the peasant requires for his own sustenance and that of his cattle are correct (and these figures seem to be generally recognised as correct), then it must be confessed that a surprising proof for the contradiction between finances and national economy lies in the fact that the Russian soldier, apart from the provisions of cabbage and of a little meat, receives since 1872, twenty-nine poods of bread stuff. The peasant

hardly ever sees any meat and very little of this most nutritious cabbage upon his table. He feeds principally upon bread and even grütze, and of these he has only two-thirds of the ration which the State looks upon as necessary for the soldier. It might be expected, under the circumstances, that the period of his military service ought to be a festive one for the Russian peasant and that in no other country conscription could have such charms as in Russia—in so far as those 29 poods of grütze or flour do not exist in the accounts of the Service department solely, but are actually consumed, without any deduction, by the soldier. Another calculation giving an amazing result is the following: the Government takes in its struggle against famine, as a minimum per head and per annum in bread stuffs, 19 $\frac{4}{5}$  poods. Statistics have shown that of the harvested corn, after deducting the export, there only remain 308·6 lbs. per head in the country. According to this the whole nation must die out from starvation. Fortunately, however, these calculations may be looked upon as proofs that the statistics are wrong, for there doubtless remain more than these 308 lbs. in the country, only this "more" the statistics cannot lay hold of—it is kept hidden, and for special reasons.

Similarly as with regard to corn production matters stand as regards the meat production. The flesh food of the Russian people is decreasing. Whilst in all other countries, with an increasing population, cattle is on the increase, this is, on the contrary, decreasing in Russia. According to Lochtin, Russia shows, during the decade from 1888 to 1898, a yearly loss in cattle of 0·08 per cent. and does not possess more cattle per head of her population than Belgium, and almost a third less than Germany. Russia, the land of grassy plains and of nomads, the land of the rich Black Earth and of the flower-carpeted Steppe! Similarly sheep-farming, pig-rearing, horse-breeding are decreasing year by year, whilst the country, in respect of these domestic animals, possesses much fewer per head of the population<sup>1</sup> than

<sup>1</sup> *Polenow*, p. 17.

other countries. The latest official investigations have given the following results: during the last ten years the number of horses in the Centre (9 *gouvernements*) has decreased by 117,000; in the east (4 *gouvernements*) by 68,000 head; the number of horseless farms is increasing there, and in all Russian *gouvernements* the farms with one horse are increasing at the expense of those with several. The export of all kinds of cattle, horses, pigs—live, and in the shape of meat, skins and fat is being zealously promoted. Only lately, in October 1901, the Government decided to increase the export to England of meat and butter, an undertaking which once more shows the boundless self-deception with which in Russia, by preference, such tasks are set which do not in the least tally with existing conditions, but which give her the appearance of having reached a high state of civilisation. As usual a commission is formed which is to inquire whether Russian cattle is suitable for fattening purposes for the English market. Russian cattle! They have not enough to subsist on, have never even for generations dreamt of fat, much less of prime meat, but now they are to be examined by a commission as to their fitness to shine in the most difficult meat market of the world. For this purpose, and for the mission of 30 agricultural travellers to England, 50,000 roubles have been thrown away, and these gentlemen have, by eating and drinking and speechifying in London and Windsor, contributed greatly towards the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian Alliance—for much more than this will probably not result from the enterprise. But this unpractical, exaggerated mode of dealing with practical questions is typical of Russia. We shall meet with many cases of a similar want of understanding, which in themselves are unimportant but characteristic of the universal lack in Russia of a correct estimate of her own powers.

As the peasant cannot live on his village land he goes to seek incidental earnings elsewhere, and leaves the cultivation of his field to his wife and children. It is, however, difficult to find incidental earnings in a

country where, apart from agriculture, there is but little demand for manual labour. In the Centre the entire industries are concentrated in Moscow and in the three or four neighbouring *gouvernements*. Beyond this industrial centre there are not any considerable factories for many hundreds, yea, thousands of miles, the metal works of Tula, of Bransk, or the coal mines and smelting furnaces of the Donez excepted. Industries to-day occupy in the whole of Russia 2 to 3 million people of both sexes. What is that amongst a peasant population of over 100 millions? The whole country of the Black Earth is dependent upon agriculture, and inasmuch as the peasant there does not find any incidental employment he does nothing at all. For home industries are mostly stifled, and labour in the fields is only to be had during a few summer months. Seven months of the year are almost entirely seven months of lost time, and therefore the assumption seems not without foundation that the daily earnings of the Russian peasant amount, on an average, to 18 or 19 kopecks ( $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d.).<sup>1</sup> "The impossibility," thus says a paper which appeared in 1892,<sup>2</sup> "of finding occupation during the whole period in which there is no agricultural labour, is in our silt-earth district one of the chief causes of the low economic level of the country population. In this respect the position of affairs has become worse as compared with former days." Since the peasant, apart from the most absolute necessities, neither grows flax nor keeps sheep, nor spins flax nor weaves wool, since everything turns upon the cultivation of corn, everything depends upon money, and this is lacking. The peasant lives, apart from those 2 per cent. who are industrial labourers, still in a state of barter, and is quite helpless against a Government which applies to him the technique and the doctrines of a financial system.

The conflict between the commune, which binds its members hand and foot economically, and the State,

<sup>1</sup> Golowin, according to Mulhall's investigations, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> S. Nikolai, on p. 305.

which requires taxes of the commune, paralyses the material development and the activity of the people. Where the peasant has broken loose from the commune and has established a free farm upon purchased land, there prosperity is often found. And the same condition of things was found prevailing by so zealous a defender of old Russian life as Prince Mestcherski<sup>1</sup> in the free Russian settlements on the lower Volga. A countryman from thence told him the following : " How striking a contrast ! in the central provinces, where the Russian people are represented, so to speak, in their very essence, wherever one looks there appear poverty, lazy slumber ; every progress in the life of the people seems to end in the desire to lead a life of semi-starvation. From thence I was taken to the *gouvernement* of Astrakhan, where, on the land of the Kirghizes, occupied by force, Russian villages have been formed. . . . I could scarcely believe my eyes when I perceived these splendid villages, with clean, spacious houses, with little front gardens and back gardens, in which contented, rich proprietors of horses and of all sorts of cattle lived, and where, apart from comfort and wealth, cleanliness and order were reigning. . . . When I saw these villages, which remind one by their flourishing condition of those (German) colonists' villages which are always pointed out to the Russian peasant as an example and a reproach, then I could not believe that here the self-same Russian people live and work who, the nearer you come to Moscow, incline their unfortunate heads the more meekly under the yoke of merciless poverty, and apparently lose all belief in their own strength, their intellectual possibilities, in their muscles, in their soul. I could not but think that they were Sectarians, Raskolniki, these happy, rich Russians in the *gouvernement* of Astrakhan ; but no, they were orthodox. . . . Under the impression of this story my soul was lost in dreams. . . . What is the meaning of this parallel between whole devastated, impoverished, starving Russian

<sup>1</sup> According to a translation from the *Grashdanin* in the *St Petersburg Gazette*, 1901, No. 184.

*gouvernements*, and those large villages of the selfsame Russian people, in which comfort and wealth are reigning, where, in a ceaseless stream, a fountain of personal and communal labour, and of individual initiative, wells up? . . . It is difficult to discover its meaning, but sadness and melancholy overwhelm my soul when asking this question: Which, considering the strength and talents of the Russian people, represents the true picture of life?—these oases of welfare in the *gouvernement* of Astrakhan or those ruined provinces in Central Russia? To this question there is no answer other than this: The picture of the rich villages of the *gouvernement* of Astrakhan is in accordance with the nature of the people, and contradictory is that of entire provinces in the centre of Russia with a ruined and miserable population!"

And *vice-versa*, what contrast between the German settlements of the south and south-west, and those in the district of the Volga, where they have adopted the Russian communal administration! Here these German villages are possibly even more wretched than the Russian; there in the south and south-west, where they have kept to their Swabian customs they are rich, prosperous, beautiful villages, whose future, it is true, has become dim since the Government has decided to rob them of their Germanism, but who hitherto have obtained by self-government splendid results differing greatly from those of the "Mir," the Russian village commune, which also possesses self-government. This privilege of self-government is to-day, for Russians and Germans alike, in danger of being sacrificed to the Moloch of equality.

However, the Government has in recent years seemed to approach the view that communal ownership of land and guardianship are no longer capable of being maintained. In the Budget Report for 1899 the Financial Minister has hinted at the abolition of the guardianship of the peasant commune. At that time I expressed the opinion (*Grenzboten*), in consequence of this report, that Monsieur Witte would be driven by

financial reasons into undertaking the reform of the entire village administration. It was not long before one heard of further steps on this difficult road. By a law of the year 1899 the guarantorship was restricted and its entire abolition promised ; further, the term for the re-division of the field was reduced to a minimum of twelve years ; at the same time it was decided that if a peasant had improved his share of the field he was to be compensated by the commune in the event of his field being taken from him at the time of re-division. This shows, if nothing more, at least the direction in which the Government tends. And since a sudden break with communal ownership would render the peasant just as helpless and incapable as the nobility became through the abolition of serfdom, it seems wise to reach the end by slow stages. This is probably the idea of the commission which first worked under the ministerial assistant, Kowalewski, and latterly under the guidance of the ministerial assistant, Kokowzew, and had to discuss the economic condition of the Centre—with which word the impoverished district is being most appropriately characterised to-day. Since these preliminary labours have been brought to a conclusion at the beginning of 1902 a new and great commission has been appointed, consisting of Ministers and high dignitaries, under the presidency of the Financial Minister, who has the right of seeking the advice of experts. The requirements of agriculture are to be set forth clearly, and the most suitable measures for meeting them to be considered. To gauge correctly the needs of agriculture from the Council Chamber of the Financial Ministry is in itself a very difficult task. It is hopeless in an Empire with such manifold conditions and forms of agriculture, and with a population so differently disposed and educated for agriculture. It is hopeless in the hands of an assembly so centralised and so remote from agriculture as is this commission. None of these twenty generals and excellencies have hardly ever given even a thought to seed-time and harvest, or to cattle-breeding. Agriculture proper could

only be helped by the farmer himself and by the self-government of the provinces. But this commission will have done much if it finally abolishes in the Russian Provinces the guarantorship of the commune and the communal ownership of land. The person of the chairman gives a guarantee that something will be accomplished in this direction. Nowhere will the great energy of Monsieur Witte have been more appropriately and more salutarily applied than here, if he passes these reforms.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEASANT (*continued*)

IN examining the collection of statistics of the provincial assemblies we see that in many *gouvernements* from a fourth to a third of the village population live in huts, which have a length and breadth of 6 arshin,<sup>1</sup> and a height of not more than 3 arshin. In such a room there live not only all the members of the family, but also the domestic animals. . . . The yearly reports issued by the Board of Agriculture show that the average daily wage of the country labourer amounts in the summer, which is the best time, in the district of the Black Earth to 27-36 kopecks, and in the south-west of Russia to 40-60 kopecks.<sup>2</sup> Where there are home industries still existing the wages are higher, but they do not exceed 50 roubles per annum, and amongst the potters in the province of Perm fall to 17 roubles per annum. If, moreover, the shortness of the summer earnings and the wageless winter are taken into account for these country labourers, then even the averages quoted by Mulhall, and mentioned in the last chapter, seem too high rather than too low: on the Black Earth the labourer does not even earn as much as 18-19 kopecks per diem, on an average. It may be that this is the average, but this does not prevent the daily wage from rising according to time and place, when a plentiful harvest or home industries require many hands. The expenditure of the peasant in those provinces is fixed by investigators at 50-65 roubles per annum for a household. If, according to more recent

<sup>1</sup> Arshin = 28 inches.

<sup>2</sup> *Issajen*, p. 7.

investigations, we take as the average expenditure of a peasant family 63 roubles 20 kopecks, of which 20 roubles 44 kopecks go in food, then this means, at any rate for the restricted part of the country here in question, a scarcity which evidently means hunger. For this sum of 63-65 roubles includes everything the village household requires in the course of a year, and even on the Volga a family cannot well be properly fed upon 20 roubles 44 kopecks, or £2, 3s. per annum. The poll tax and the salt tax, it is true, had already been abolished during the new financial era under the Minister Bunge. In order to facilitate the purchase of land for the peasant the Peasant Agrarian Bank was founded. However, just as the nobility were helped but little by monetary loans, so the attempts to help the peasant, by loans or by the remittance of taxes to obtain working capital have been crowned with but little success. Whoever becomes rich in the village, whoever has a deposit in the savings bank but rarely owes this fact to the reduction or remittance of taxes, or to Government loans, but rather to himself, to hard work, or to the exploitation of his neighbours. In the great Russian farming districts, however, very little of the peasants' money finds its way into the savings banks, all the more into the fiscal suction-pump—the brandy monopoly. As long as the Russian peasant has a bushel of wheat to sell he does not refuse the brandy. The poorest village manages to find means (if necessary in the communal poor box) to celebrate some feast-day, *i.e.*, to drink a few pailfuls of brandy. The fact is they know of no other joys in life and have not been trained to save. On the contrary they have been trained not to covet personal possessions. For private property was, and still is for them, valueless. Before 1861 the lord of the manor could make it his own at any time, and since 1851 there is the guarantorship of the commune, which robs the saving individual of his roubles, either to pay the taxes which the neighbour cannot pay, or the commune forces him by threats to give up his rouble for the general benefit. If the ministerial Budget Report for

1902 quotes the constant consumption of spirits for the last ten years per head of the population at 3 pints of spirit of 100°, this in itself, and compared with the consumption of alcohol in other countries, is not very much, for the Russian peasant takes alcohol only in the form of brandy; the West European drinks wine and beer besides. The quantity named by the Minister, however, means an expenditure of 3 roubles, 65 kopecks, or 7s. 9½d., of which 2½ roubles go in duty. This is ruinous for a peasant who, as we are told, lives during the whole year with his family upon 63 or 65 roubles only, and for a tax-payer who in any case has to suffer hunger for the State. The peasant with a family of only four members would thus spend 14 roubles, 60 kopecks, or almost the fifth part of his entire income, in brandy. This is more than I am able to believe. However, granting that this proportion is exaggerated, it seems to be correct, nevertheless, that the proportion between income and brandy consumption is a very unhealthy one. What the Government remitted off the poll tax it takes back from the mass of the people by the brandy tax, and thus the method is changed but not the result. Whatever the peasant can save, yea, more than he can well spare, finally goes through the taxation-pump into the Treasury. The cause of this lies in the moral character of the peasant, which probably has been shaped by outward circumstances. The desolate life in the village, which not only does not inspire any intellectual nor even any material interest in the native soil, naturally is ruled by the most brutal powers, the policeman's truncheon and the brandy.

Those huts in the villages, which Issajew describes, were mostly built in the days when the bondmaster gave the necessary wood free, and since then they have been repaired again and again where they have not been burnt down. Meanwhile, the forests disappeared even where in olden times they were numerous, and in the country of the Steppe there never had been any. The wood became dearer year by year, and in proportion to the repair of the old huts. Then followed the im-

poverishment of the peasant ; the huts were repaired more and more rarely and more wretchedly, and when a new hut was built it was made of bad wood, and more poorly built than the peasant used to build it formerly. "The fact of poverty," says Nowikow, "is apparent ; there is no longer any doubt about it. Meanwhile, we continually hear that the economic position of the peasant is being investigated by the provincial and Government statisticians, that Commissioners are being appointed to learn all about it." Unfortunately the commissioners hardly ever get to know the true state of things and if they do, everything goes on in the old way, for the Government has more to do than to see to the repairing of the peasants' huts. Thus the huts stretch along the village street, low, sparsely covered with straw, at the back a vegetable garden ; on the opposite side of the street, beyond the never-cleaned dust and refuse heap, a wretched farm building if the peasant is not quite as poor as his neighbours. No tree, no shrub to be seen far and wide, only the cupolas of the wooden or brick church rise whitewashed above the grey monotony. The village has thousands, 3000 or more inhabitants. A few shops offer the simple wares for sale which the peasant does not make himself. A smith, a shoemaker—and the monopoly shop, where the Crown distils its taxes by a plentiful brandy sale. No doctor, no chemist, only a few 'knowing ones'—old women quacks. Let us step into one of these peasant dwellings.

"Even now," says our guide,<sup>1</sup> "half the huts are heated in the black fashion—has anyone ever seen what that means? It means that in the morning when the fire is lighted an impenetrable smoke fills the upper part of the hut and disperses through cracks or through a special opening, mostly, however, through the door opened for this purpose. The inhabitants spend this time lying or sitting on the ground, in order not to swallow too much of the smoke. 20° of cold enter through the door. When the heating operation is over

<sup>1</sup> Nowikow, p. 225.

everything is shut down and it is as hot in the hut as in a bathroom. Towards morning the water often freezes again. The walls and beds are covered with black soot. Here the family of about eight souls lives : the grandfather with his wife, the married son, the daughter, the children. Here they eat and sleep on the straw, here children are born, here women spin and weave, here the boys have to learn their lessons, here you see calves, lambs, sometimes pigs and fowls ; an unbearable stench pervades the room, a lamp without a chimney sheds its light, or there is no light at all, if they have no money to buy paraffin. Outside there are 20° R. of frost, but the hut only contains two sheepskins, so the inhabitants crawl on to the big stove and warm themselves ; each in turn makes room for the other and freezes again below on the straw, or he takes one of the sheepskins, goes to work somewhere, returns wet and cold, his clothes are put upon the stove to dry, the hut is steaming with them. The next day the wife takes the sheepskin and goes to work as the husband did to-day. Everywhere dirt, for soap is a luxury and not by any means can all afford it. For laundry purposes the water in the brook suffices, and for washing one's body there is the Turkish bath on Saturdays, the comfort of the peasant. However poor the village it always boasts of a public bathroom. And the food ! Plain cabbage, that is to say, hot water in which cabbage is swimming, and a spoonful of hemp oil, boiled potatoes and wheat groats, this is the dinner. If there is any milk it is for the children ; meat is only provided on feast-days, a fowl at Christmas and Easter. Often the potatoes, the grütze, are lacking—then there is only black bread. Failure of crops and even the bread is lacking."

What has not been written in the Press for decades and decades on hygiene or been discussed by innumerable commissions ? Two hundred years ago the first medical man with scientific training came to Russia ; but not until 1861 had they advanced so far as to appoint district doctors in most of the districts ; and these districts are often of the size of kingdoms. Since 1861,

apart from the erection of schools, the chief merit of the provincial assemblies has been to agitate for hospitals, for the appointment of more doctors and midwives. However meritorious their work may have been, how far advanced are we to-day? According to the statistics of the St Petersburg *Viedomosti* of the year 1899 (February) there was in nine provinces with rural districts but one doctor for 26,740 (Cherson) to 48,800 (Poltava) inhabitants, *i.e.*, on an average one doctor for 35,000 inhabitants. How can the peasant think of medical help except in especially favourable conditions? Even if the doctor and chemist were only a few miles off he would not have the money to pay for the medicine, or would not have the horse to carry him there, or the old customs would teach him to call for a "knowing one" or better still to moan, to lie down on the stove and to die. Or a woman bears a child, where? In the cold hut, with the help of an ignorant woman; immediately afterwards she is put upon the hot stove, has to drink brandy, and after three or four days she goes out again to work in the field. And the child? Well, if a milch cow happens to be there it gets some milk; if there is none, it is given a sucking-bag filled with black bread, which is rarely changed, goes from mouth to mouth and spreads syphilis, as Nowikow says. The child eats anything and everything, dysentery sets in, until at last it dies. No doctor, no medicine, no good advice would be of any avail. Try, if you like, to fight against this mad way of treating the woman or the child; try, if you like, to tell them not to give cucumber to a child suffering from diarrhoea—you turn away, and if the child cries it is given a cucumber. Try to persuade a sick woman to ask advice of the midwife—"on no account, it is a disgrace, I shall be laughed at for being ill." Is it astonishing, considering these terrible conditions of life and this ignorance, that there are such numbers of invalids suffering from all sorts of anæmias, catarrhs, that almost all women are suffering of a disease of some sort, of hysteria, that children and also adults die like flies? It is rare to find a healthy family—the women are

all diseased with few exceptions. From another part of the country one hears that the great mortality amongst children is caused by their being brought up on bread alone; all milk there, in a village of the Province Tver, is sent to the cheese manufactory of Monsieur Wereschtcagin. It is the same story as with the corn: the milk so necessary for nourishment takes its way, in the shape of cheese, to St Petersburg or abroad, and the peasant is too poor to keep it for himself.

The consequences of this mode of living have made themselves felt for a long time. The mortality is increasing and the increase of the population is checked in proportion. Schwanebach gives the yearly increase for the eleven years from 1885 to 1897 for Russia proper—the Centre, South, South-West, and East—as 0·26 per cent., whilst it amounts for the whole Empire to 1·38 per cent., *i.e.*, more than five times that amount; for the Western Frontier Provinces, 2·2 per cent., *i.e.*, 8½ times as much. In Germany the increase of the population has amounted during the five years from 1895 to 1900 to 7·82 per cent., or 1·56 per cent. per annum, *i.e.*, 0·16 per cent. more than the increase in the Russian Empire and six times as much as the increase in Central Russia. The former much-vaunted rapid increase of the Russians has, according to this, ceased completely, and like that of the French population received a check. Foreign immigration into the Western frontier districts can scarcely count now, as it is balanced by the very considerable emigration from these provinces into Russia, into the Centre, no immigration taking place *vice versa* by Russians into the Frontier Provinces. On the other hand, the bands migrating to Siberia consist to a large extent of peasants from the central provinces whose shares of land have become too small and too poor, and who feel too cramped at home. They leave their villages by tens of thousands every year, in order to settle down in Western Siberia upon fresh soil. And yet upon this naturally most fertile soil in these provinces there are, per square km., only 51 (Kursk), 44 (Orel), 41 (Tambov), 46 (Tula), 39 (Voronezh)

inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> A further symptom is the progressive degeneration of the peasants in the Centre. Every year the recruitings are a witness to this; complaints are increasing about the number of men rejected from the service as useless, about the decrease of chest measurement and of height. The former well-known fine proportions of the Russian peasant have disappeared. The Russian recruit comes off badly by the side of the recruit from the non-Russian provinces.

If one tries to picture for a moment a village with two or three thousand inhabitants who have to cultivate their small piece of land a long way off, sometimes several miles from their home, who have no wood for fuel, for building purposes, no stones for foundations, who have never anything but straw upon their roofs, in many districts even for their fuel only straw mixed with dung, it will be seen that the commune alone is responsible for the excessive growth of the villages. Without it the peasant proprietors, as they would have been, would not have allowed the division of the land to assume such unreasonable proportions, and instead of the 500 farmers there would to-day be found upon the same space 50 or less. They would have their farm-servants and would be content and prosperous. The dwelling-houses would be better, the stoves less dangerous, the conflagrations rarer. Nowadays these villages, as soon as a fire breaks out anywhere, are burnt down completely, nothing is left; and how easily is a fire caused in this accumulation of tinder and amongst a population whose highest enjoyment is intoxication. It has been calculated that every year 200,000,000 roubles' worth of peasant property is destroyed by fire. And again, can it be wondered at if in such a village, containing 2990 beggars and 10 well-to-do village tyrants, in which hut joins hut in endless monotony, brandy plays the chief part? In a large village a shop is to be seen here and there, or a parish hall, a school—the smaller the village the more rarely are these met with; but in former days the public-house, nowadays the monopoly-shop, these

<sup>1</sup> In Germany 104 per square km.

are never wanting. Every business transaction which lies outside the usual routine, every family event, every bargain, every few roubles remitted in taxes which the commune elder grants, every meeting of the commune for an election, for a resolution respecting the fields, the church, etc., all and everything requires brandy and is managed with brandy. And besides, there are 150, yea, even 170, holidays in the year, during which the peasant does not work. Firstly, because in winter he can find no work; secondly, because he has been forbidden to work by the church or police; and finally, because he likes it so. On Sundays the industrious man is more likely to be seen in the fields when there is a rush of work; but the Saints' days and the Crown holidays are not lightly to be disregarded. If these were winter days only, during which the Russian peasants sleep in any case because no work is to be had; but it is the same in summer, when the work is urgent, when on one such holiday the harvest may be spoilt by untimely rain, or the seed be withered up by the scorching sun, and which might be saved if it had but been sown twenty-four hours sooner—but all the year round there are holidays, and how is the peasant to spend them if he cannot sleep and happens to have a penny in his pocket? Is he to go for a walk in the treeless fields, or on the Steppe, or beyond the village with wife and children after the manner of German peasants? In the burning sun, without a vestige of shade, with his sickly, despised wife, the half-naked children? Formerly the inn was the meeting-place of the men; the young people danced on the square in front of it. Now there is only the public-house, in which one cannot sit down for a pleasant chat, in which one has to buy the bottle of brandy in order to drink it outside in the street. The old inn was dangerous; if one once sat down it was not easy to get up again; you drank more with your friends than was good, you were tempted by the host to drink more than you could pay for and soon were deeply in debt, and where, as in the south-eastern district, it was the Jew who stood behind the counter,

you found yourself on the downward road. The danger is now lessened, but, on the other hand, this last remnant of social life has disappeared, and of the brandy only the enjoyment of intoxication is left. Or you drink at home and become a drunkard ; the wife also drinks, and the children get their share. This is the dark side of the monopoly-shop. If in Russia per head of the population less alcohol is consumed than in Germany, France and England, it is accounted for by the poverty of the people ; the peasant has not sufficient means to pay for brandy every day, and for other stimulants he is not able to pay at all. He only drinks on special occasions, or when he happens to have some money, or when he has his "saponi," this extraordinary Russian disease. A man who has led the most sober, orderly life for weeks, or for months, is suddenly seized by an irresistible, physical desire for brandy and spends a few days in uninterrupted intoxication. Once the drinking bout over, the man is again the same industrious and sober man he was before. If the peasant were less poor he might enjoy every day a drink ; a glass of beer, or of mead and brandy, would be less dangerous to him unless he went to the other extreme of drinking more, the more he earned. Such as he is now he lives in misery and dirt, without a stimulus to brain and heart, without an opportunity for harmless enjoyment, without the chance of attaining to any state of comfort, and yet tied to the soil. Only the village tyrant, the "fist," has belief in himself and a future before him ; the others, the great mass of the people, lead an almost animal existence from day to day, and the African explorer, Junker, was right when, at the sight of the negro villages in the Eastern Soudan, with their clean houses and streets, with their well-fed and merry inhabitants, he thought with a heavy heart of the Russian villages. But let those negroes be governed by Russian officials, by conscription, a financial system and police, and all the other signs of culture, and soon these savages will no longer be enviable. Taxes and brandy would soon drive away their merriness. Yet in

spite of it all the Russian peasant is so tenacious and so careless by nature that even to-day, unless famine or pestilence are raging in the village, you may see, on a Sunday in summer, young men and women in their national dress, walking merrily through the fields, or dancing to the tune of a concertina. If there is bread for to-morrow the peasant has accustomed himself long ago to look upon everything as in perfect order.

However fertile the land of the Black Earth district it yet shows defects which check any higher state of culture. The rich, soft soil has neither gravel nor stones, and has more need than poor soil of artificial roads. Since there is no material for these there exist, apart from a few highroads, no roads properly so called ; what a bridge is worth in this district is shown by the well-known story in which the peasant calls a gentleman who is driving along and breaks down with the bridge, a fool, since he ought to have seen that a bridge was coming and yet he did not turn off from the road. It is much safer to drive by the side of the bridge through the river, and on in the direction of the ruts which, running side by side at intervals, send up in dry weather thick clouds of black dust, and in wet weather turn into a quagmire. Another obstacle to civilisation is the lack of water. For miles and miles you drive without seeing a house, a tree, an undulation in the soil ; everywhere fields or meadows divided into long narrow ribands, or lying barren in an endless uniform level. For miles there is no settlement because there is no water. Suddenly you stand before a steep declivity cut into the plain as with a knife, sharp and deep, so that from the distance no edge, no interruption is perceived in the plain. Before the glance of the surprised traveller there stretches a narrow ravine in which, during summer, only a small brook winds along, which swells with the melting snow, and then carries floods of water from both sides, along which, unchecked by a hill, or a moor, or a forest, collecting from afar off, rob the soil of many of its most fertilising elements. However, there *is* water, and for this reason the row of

village huts stretch on both sides of the brook, extending for many miles, a village of hundreds of huts protected from storms by the steep mud banks. Wherever the fields and meadows disappeared the masses of water furrowed the soil the more powerfully the more easily, and these cracks, broadening from year to year, became valleys and dales. This ever-increasing furrowing of the land has reached dangerous proportions to-day; the cultivated fields are torn up and diminished, the rivers are choked, and the State is called upon to help. It will be difficult, however, to do anything, except by restoring forests and meadows. Where the soil offers greater resistance to the water, as is the case in the northern parts of the Centre, there also water is more easily found in the plains and the villages are not obliged to follow the course of the river. In the district of the Black Earth, with its porous sub-soil, the lack of water is one of the chief causes of the formation of large villages with their distant fields, and is the chief obstacle in the way of less centralised settlements. However, the combination of village and river is to be found, and for other reasons, even where there is no lack of water, as in the northern forest zone, the so-called Lake District. In the *gouvernements* of Novgorod, Vologda, Olonez, Archangel, Perm, with their lakes and their forest ocean, the rivers are almost the only means of communication. Here the peasant settles on the bank of a river in order to communicate by boat with the nearest town, which may be 100 or 300 miles off, in order to utilise the river meadows or to plough some fields above them. Further on, beyond the field, the virgin forest begins, stretching over hundreds of miles, only interrupted by moors or lakes, without a road or a dwelling, only passable to man when clad with its wintry mantle of ice and snow. There are even to-day great tracts of land which are as good as without an owner; there in the forest anybody may choose a piece of land, plough and cultivate it, sow and reap, without ever requiring any permission. Thus gradually a village is formed, which subsists chiefly by hunting and fishing because the climate forbids

agriculture; then, if by chance an extraordinary event sends the news of the existence of this village into the district town, or even into the capital of the province, there appears an official who includes the settlement in his taxation list, and thus it is recognised by the State. Here the peasant lives as wildly as the Samoyede or the Laplander, but he suffers less hunger than his companion in the South, on the land formerly so rich in corn but unfortunately no longer so to-day.

Such is the material misery of the Great-Russian people. There is not much difference as regards their spiritual life. One can readily understand that, living in such poverty, the peasant has neither the time, nor the wish, nor the capacity for thinking much about schools and learning. Before the year 1861 there were hardly any national schools. In the "thirties" of the previous century the Government had begun to found a few elementary schools upon Crown and appanage lands. But in the year 1853 there were upon these Crown lands only 2795 Russian elementary schools, with 153,117 scholars, and on the appanage estates 204 schools, with 7477 scholars.<sup>1</sup> They were very bad and showed no results. Since 1861, especially since the introduction of Provincial Assemblies, the interest in the national schools has been astir; the provinces founded with their own means schools, and urged the richer villages to do something in their turn. In the year 1893 the expenditure for the national schools was defrayed in the following proportion:—

By the Prov. Assemblies . . . .	69 per cent.
By the peasant communes . . . .	29 per cent.
By the State and other sources . . . .	2 per cent.

In the *gouvernements* possessing Provincial Assemblies the expenditure for the national schools has, during the last five years, risen by 66 per cent. But by the law of 12th June 1900 the Government has restricted the in-

<sup>1</sup> Milukow, *Outlines of the History of Russian Civilisation*. St Petersburg, 1899, p. 350.

crease of revenue of the Provincial Budget so much that a further increase of expenditure for the schools has been prevented. In the year 1891 the Government handed the care of the national school, in so far as it had hitherto been a Government school, almost entirely over to the Church, who ordered the village priest to look after the matter. It is difficult to ascertain the number of Church schools. Milükow<sup>1</sup> mentions for 1893, 58,490 national schools, of which 51,540 were orthodox. Nowikow counts to-day, for the whole Empire, altogether 70,000 national schools. According to the *Government Messenger* there existed in January 1899 about 21,500 elementary schools managed by the Church, with, roughly, 1½ million children, and besides these 18,341 Church schools for the children of the clergy, consisting of one or two classes; amongst these sixteen teachers' schools. The teachers comprise the clergy, deacons, choristers, but in the majority (37,000) laymen. Of these more than 19,000 received a salary of 100 roubles and less; in the province of Voronezh, for instance, it is said that the teachers of the Church schools are content with a salary of 40 roubles per annum. Often, however, the salary is supplemented by contributions from private individuals, or from the Provincial Assemblies. The highest salary, amounting to about 500 roubles, was then only received by 122 persons, by the teachers in the seminaries and similar institutions. Even these figures show the level of the Church schools. Ignorant as the lower clergy are they are incapable of spreading culture, and he who lives upon £5 or £10 per annum cannot, even in Russia, rate his knowledge and teaching powers very highly. Moreover, the Russian peasant does not benefit by a great part of the expenditure of the Church upon teachers, etc., but rather the non-Russian children in Poland, Lithuania, in the Baltic Provinces, etc., for whom, as we shall see later on, much more is done than for the Russians proper. Taking all in all the Church expended in the year 1899 about 11 million roubles upon schools, of which 5 million roubles were supplied by the

<sup>1</sup> Milükow, p. 357.

Treasury. Nowikow calculates that of this sum not 2 millions fall to the share of the 21,500 elementary national schools, and this would tally with the quoted salary of less than 100 roubles for the teacher. It is not surprising if such schools show but poor results, especially if one considers the influence emanating from the Synod, which to-day is all for religious propaganda and evidently for obscuring the intellect. A striking testimony of this prevailing spirit was brought to light in November 1901 by the St Petersburg *Viedomosti*.

In some of the Church schools for teachers missionary divisions were arranged, in which the teachers were made acquainted with sectarianism, more especially with the Stundists, and were provided with the means for resisting them. According to this missionary programme religious instruction in the elementary schools is chiefly given in a spirit of polemics against the Stundists. In the eparchies of Poltava, Charkov, Voronzh, Astrakhan, Tambov, religious instruction has assumed this character, which, for children who have barely learnt to read and write, must inevitably lead to the most superficial conception of religion. Instead of religion the children learn Church disputes, and instead of schooling and education they receive in the Church schools lessons on missionary debates and on choir singing. These two subjects are particularly favoured from above, a fact which in itself sufficiently characterises this kind of national school. Almost equally characteristic is the fact that our old friend, the Rural Captain, Nowikow, who looks upon the spread of school education amongst the people as the most important task of the day, considers singing as one of the chief subjects. If so thoughtful a man would found popular education upon music what notions must be prevalent even amongst the more educated classes!

In thirty-six *gouvernements* with Provincial Assemblies there were expended in the year 1900 by the Provincial Assemblies, upon national schools, 15 million roubles, so that for the elementary education of the orthodox Russian there only remained 20 million roubles, and if

one deducts the expenses for non-Russian but orthodox schools there remains even less. This is precious little with a Budget of 18 hundred millions, and especially little in view of the fact that from the Treasury itself only 5 millions of this sum were forthcoming, *i.e.*, about one penny per head of the orthodox Russian population. Trubnikow calculates the share of the elementary schools in the expenditure of the State for 1898 as 0·7 per cent.<sup>1</sup> And now we read (*St. Petersburg Viedomosti*) that in the year 1902 the Synod only has in hand for the national schools  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles, and will therefore reduce its expenditure by about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions. On the other hand, there are set apart in the Budget for 1902 for the lower schools about 9 millions, *i.e.*, 2 millions more than in the year 1901. To these lower schools belong district schools, town schools, parish schools, elementary and national schools. How much then will remain for the elementary and national schools? Scarcely more than those 5 kopecks, or a 1d. per head of the population, and little more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the Budget of expenditure, if one adds together the sums which the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment (Education) and the Synod expend for this purpose. Where the nobility and the peasants themselves take matters in hand or would do so if the State gave them a free hand, as for instance in the Baltic Provinces, in Poland, in a few provinces with Provincial Assemblies, there the Government would be required to do but little. But in the provinces of Russia Proper the initiative of the population in itself is slight and is checked by the Government and the Church as much as in the non-Russian Provinces.

The Russian peasant of to-day has an instinctive desire to learn to read at least. The miserable Church schools are of slight value; the provincial schools do far more. Besides, there often happens to be in the village a time-expired sergeant as a teacher, or the son learns reading from his father; thus, in spite of the bad schools, it is no rare occurrence amongst the men to be able

<sup>1</sup> P. 167.

to read ; on the contrary, it is so prevalent that in most of the larger villages somebody is to be found who takes in a newspaper. Useful also are the lessons which are given to most recruits in the regiment.

How matters stand on the whole is shown by communications which are beginning to appear in the Press on the results of the census of 1897. According to these (*Russk. Viedom.*) there were in St Petersburg 1,242,815 Russian subjects, of whom 469,720 were unable to read or write. Thus in the capital, in which most is done for the elementary schools, 37·4 per cent. of the population are entirely without schooling.<sup>1</sup> If this is the standard of elementary instruction in the capital one may gauge the value of the elementary schools of orthodox Russia. On this point the recruiting statistics give reliable information. Of the 290,000 recruits selected per annum only 43 per cent. are able to read and write. If one deducts the soldiers coming from Poland and the Baltic Provinces, who receive a good elementary education, the number of Russian recruits who are unable to read and write would reach to far more than 60 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Naturally women are in a worse plight. The newspaper, *Nedelā (The Week)*, relates that on an average only one out of 7 peasant girls receives any education at all ; that in many villages there is not a single female creature able to read, not to mention writing.

In most of the larger villages there is a church and a priest ; it is the latter's duty to keep a Church school. There ought, therefore, to exist a great number of these schools, and one might assume, if figures are insisted upon, that there is one orthodox elementary Church school for every 4000 Russians.<sup>3</sup> If, however, one keeps in mind the quality of this schooling, if one considers the wretched condition, the ignorance of the priests, and

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that many Finlanders, Estonians and Letts resident here and there are not illiterate.

<sup>2</sup> In Germany the illiterate among the recruits were 0·15 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> In the census of 1897 there were in Russia 87,385,000 members of the orthodox Church.

even more that of their acolytes and choristers, of the non-commissioned officers and such-like, who are appointed as village schoolmasters, one cannot expect from these schools any conspicuous results. The non-clerical schools also, the so-called ministerial schools, which are founded here and there by a commune, and which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, as well as the provincial schools, lack a sufficient number of teachers, of schoolhouses, of means, in spite of all the efforts of the Provincial Assemblies, to bring some sort of life into this important department. Poverty, necessity, external and internal conditions of man, the aversion of the Church authorities to education in general—all this checks and in no way promotes popular education. A very retrograde paper, such as the *Moscow News*, exclaimed in despair not long ago, "We have no roads, the people live in steppes, in forests and moors. The settlements are not unfrequently separated by uncultivated and roadless tracts of 500 to 800 versts, and the population, which is equally uncultivated, and here and there, so to speak, even savage, leads a sad existence, far from all industrial and commercial means of communication. Is it humanly possible to supply all these districts with properly-organised schools and with teachers?" Whilst there is very little done for elementary Russian education by State and Church, whilst only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the enormous Budget of expenditure is available for this purpose, considerable sums are expended every year in foreign countries upon the education of Servians, Bulgarians, of Poles, Lithuanians, Letts, Esthonians, etc., who mostly have far better schools of their own and in sufficient numbers. Thus, in the Eparchy of Riga there is one Russian Orthodox Church school for every 554 orthodox inhabitants; this is six times as much as in the whole Empire per head of the orthodox population. It is owing to this political Propaganda of the Church that none of the Russian provinces are as well supplied with schools as the three Baltic Provinces, and Livonia in particular, which is

worked by this Church propaganda, as the following examples show:—

GOUVERNEMENT.	One School.	One Scholar, Male and Female, upon Inhabitants
Moscow . . . . .	1772	23
Vladimir . . . . .	1620	27
Tambov . . . . .	2330	37
Livonia . . . . .	766	15

According to this, Livonia is more richly endowed with schools than even Germany, where there is only one school for every 874 inhabitants, and for the reason that the Orthodox Church school has taken its place by the side of the Protestant School.<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that the orthodox Russian elementary schools of the Baltic Provinces are not only the most richly endowed, but also the most efficient, Russian orthodox elementary schools in the Empire, firstly, because they have to withstand the competition of the most excellent Lutheran national schools, founded by the nobility and municipalities, and efficiently conducted by the Protestant clergy as far as the State has not checked them. Secondly, and this is the chief reason, because from times immemorial the interests of the Russians have been directed far more towards external propaganda than towards the internal conditions in Russia. At the head of this external activity, directed towards political Church propaganda, there stands the Synod, the chief procurator, Pobedonoszew, as may be seen every year by the reports he makes to the Emperor upon the condition of the Orthodox Church in the Frontier Provinces, where both Catholicism and Protestantism are fought with most unfair weapons, and yet there the schools are in a much better material con-

<sup>1</sup> Compare "School Statistics of the Free Economic Society of Elementary Schools in Russia to the year 1894."

dition than in Russia Proper. Once more we have here the curious phenomenon of the Russian willing to suffer hunger, not only materially but also spiritually, for the sake of politics.

How are any results in elementary education to be expected from school education given by priests, who, according to their education and position amongst the people, are as ill-suited for it as is the Russian "Pope" on an average.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHURCH AND MORALS

It may be that the preceding as well as the succeeding descriptions will appear exaggerated to some of my readers. It would indeed be a mistake to suppose that, following in the tracks of these descriptions, anyone would be able to find his way through the whole of the Russian Empire. I have more than once made the observation that side by side with misery there is comfort, that, in spite of the decay of the nobility and of the peasants, there are excellent men to be found in healthy and prosperous surroundings, and the same may be said of the class with which I shall now deal in brief. There do exist well-educated priests and livings richly endowed and well looked after by private individuals. Both the Russian priest and the Russian peasant possess elementary traits of character which, under favourable conditions, develop great moral qualities. However, the testimony which I found my descriptions are similar one to the other that one is likely to be not merely the sad lot of a few unfortunates. No country is less uniform as regards its civilisation. The contrasts between rich and poor, between deepest luxury and deepest misery, are as in the most advanced industrial country the standard of general culture, apart from single individuals, varies greatly in different parts of the country. Our descriptions are derived from parts of the country which in culture during the last

decades is an undisputed fact. I therefore ask my readers always to keep in mind that it is quite within the range of possibility to travel through Russia from St Petersburg to Odessa without perceiving much of the misery and the want of civilisation which are bewailed on the right and on the left of the road by Russian observers. In the following paragraphs I shall speak of the parish clergy only, not of the monastic clergy, who, in their wealthy monasteries, live like "unburied corpses," as an old Russian writer has put it, and who at the same time manage the affairs of the Church.

With a very scanty education the future priest leaves the seminary, chooses the prescribed companion, almost invariably from amongst his own class, the daughter of a priest, and after his marriage is sent into a village. What his experiences are there we read in the *Memories of a Village Priest*.<sup>1</sup> He arrives—no inn, no reception! "Where does the sexton live? They showed me a miserable hut. And the verger? They pointed to an even more wretched hovel. Let us drive to the sexton. We drive thither and perceive a small crooked church built of stone, enclosed by a rotten wooden palisade, and a dilapidated half-open hut. We enter; the floor is of mud, the two windows, fifteen inches high, are dim, the walls damp, the corners covered with mildew." The unfortunate couple are located with the peasant, who has two rooms, and crams himself and his family into one. Then begins the bargaining with the commune as to who is to supply a dwelling for the priest. "After many entreaties, much bowing and painful humiliation on the one side, wise instructions and haughty bearing on the other—I am sent for, at the expiration of a fortnight. I am to attend a parish meeting and ask for a home. I have to discourse for a long time, yea, almost to beg them individually to be good enough to give me some separate room. At last they make up their minds . . . and I receive orders to move into a peasant's house." . . . The room turned out to be scarcely better than the verger's hut, and in

<sup>1</sup> From the Russian, by M. v. Oettingen, 1894. Cotta.

this dirty hole the clerical couple had to live henceforth with the old peasants. At tea-time the sexton appears, but drunk. The priest asks him why he is drunk. "You, little father, have not yet settled down here. When you will have been here a year you will drink even more than I." And truly it would not be surprising, considering the life which the priest has to lead here. Of money he has hardly any; he has to earn his living by baptisms, funerals, etc., he has to drive into the smaller villages of the neighbourhood in order to earn a farthing here, to obtain a fowl and a little flour there, and sometimes he spends an entire day driving about in order to return home with twopence; this is the rule, not the exception, and the cry is always "drink." The parish gives him the so-called home, but as a sort of house-warming he has to supply a pail of brandy and to drink with them on peril of forfeiting their liberality simultaneously with their affection. "You have to deal with us alone," so they say, "you must show us respect; if so, we will grant you everything and respect you in return. But if you do not desire this, you had better pack up at once and go. Do not spare your back; it will be to your advantage to bow down before the parish." In this dirty hovel, the rotten floor of which is washed once a year before Easter, where neither light nor air ever penetrates during the school-hours of the long winter, there also the school children have to be taught. Many a priest, thus complains the writer, lives in a den or in the village public-house. It is therefore easy to understand why drunkenness amongst this class is so rife, and why, according to the direction of the chief procurator, Pobedonoszew, in the "Service Registers" of the priests, there must always be mentioned "to what extent the individual is accustomed to consume intoxicating liquor." Such a register, sighs the priest, does not exist for other State officials; this shows how naïvely the priest looks upon himself as a State official, which in reality he is.

These are descriptions of thirty or forty years ago. But

although something has been done in the meantime—at least upon paper—the condition of the parish priests is still a most wretched one, even to-day, taking into account the accumulated wealth in churches and monasteries. Even the Budget of the Church administration of the Synod proves this. For the year 1901 there is an estimate of about  $10\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles for “the rural clergy, those in towns, for missions and missionaries.” If this sum were spent entirely upon the lower clergy of Russia Proper the individual priest would obtain about 100 roubles per annum. A great deal, however, must be deducted for missions and missionaries, for the clergy abroad, where frequently Russian Churches are built without this being required in the least. Even more is expended upon the many Russian churches and clerical institutions in the non-Russian parts of Russia. Everywhere, from Kamchatka to the Vistula, Russian churches and priests are being maintained, even in places where no religious, but merely a political aim prompts the Synod to spread propaganda. The comparison of the Russian village priests in the province of Saratov or Tambov, with his brother-in-order in Poland, Lithuania, Livonia, is often surprising. Comfortable large dwelling-houses, often horses and carriages, fields and meadows, gardens, handsome, cheerful churches. The priest lives comfortably on 1000 to 1500 roubles of salary or profit upon his glebe land, he has his nice schoolroom, is not obliged to bend his back, nor to drink brandy, nor to suffer hunger. Brotherhoods are being founded all over orthodox Russia, collections are made in order to help Lithuanians and Letts to become orthodox and to be Russianised, all for the sake of political ends. Scarcely has Russia taken possession of Manchuria, when, according to the Press, it is decided to found a Manchurian bishopric, with a seat at Pekin, and a great Russian orthodox monastery in Manchuria, in order to further effectually, the orthodox Russian mission there. For all sorts of distant objects money is lavishly spent; “for us priests alone none is avail-

able." Thus our village priests complain again and again. The examples he quotes are certainly convincing.

In a thickly-populated parish, he tells us, the priest receives 144 roubles; in a medium-sized parish, 108 roubles; and in a small parish, 72 roubles in salary (p. 191). Moreover, these poor priests are badly fleeced by the Consistories; all their affairs are managed by the aid of money. Similar things are related of the "seventies," by the Englishman, Wallace, in his book.<sup>1</sup> Since then some things, and in some places even many things, have improved; the Russian is not stingy with his gifts for Church and priests, but the complaints of the lower clergy about their wretched condition, about the disregard of the people and the pressure exercised by the Church authorities, do not cease, and experiences such as that of the priest in question may often be met with even to-day. If we take up a description from our own times, the *Chronicles of Leskow*,<sup>2</sup> we shall not meet the same material and moral misery, it is true, but a position of the priests which, nevertheless, makes any religious or moral influence upon his parish well-nigh impossible. The purest character, the best intentions, are checked by a Church Government which only recognises the traditional and prescribed outward forms of the ritual and prohibits every independent feeling and interpretation of the Word of God. To hunt sectarians is fashionable, and the priest must endeavour to track them if he is to be thought efficient. The truth is that everywhere, even in the Church, one feels the finger of the Government and of politics. Which saint has to be evoked in this or that case, this every deacon knows pat off, but the preaching of the Gospel and the care of souls, so essential for the peasant, and in particular for the Russian peasant—this path is strewn with thorns for the priest by the Church authorities. The natural consequence is that the attitude of the peasant towards the Church is, like his

<sup>1</sup> *Russia*. Leipzig, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> *Leskow*, Collection of Works. St Petersburg, 1892. Third edition. Vols. I. II.

religious life, purely external, consisting in customs, formulæ, ceremonial sacrifices. And further, the consequence is that as soon as he is touched by the spirit of the Gospel he turns away from the State Church and becomes a sectarian. Then the Church steps in. As soon as there is a chance of political propaganda there is money for the priest, for the missions, for the churches, for the schools. For the sake of a policy the Russian willingly starves, even in the religious sense.

Whoever wishes to obtain an insight into the moral life of the Russian people would seek in vain for statistics of morals of the modern kind, and if he should find them they would not be of much use, as they would not be reliable. Only scattered accounts about crimes, drunkenness, etc., are available, but they are unreliable if taken as representing the average of the entire Russian people, not to speak of the entire Russian Empire. If, however, the material and spiritual conditions which were touched upon in the preceding account are kept in view, one is driven to the conclusion that the moral level of this people cannot be high. Modern Russian literature, this wonderful mirror of national life, only too well confirms this assumption. Whoever knows Terpigorew, Gorki, Tschechov or Tolstoi's smaller writings, for example, the much-admired book, *The Power of Darkness*, must feel the deep degradation into which the peasant of Great Russia has sunk.

Family life is not shattered amongst the upper classes only. Other peoples, the Germans of the seventeenth and the French of the eighteenth century, also sank to a low state of moral degradation, without, however, poisoning too much the life of the lower classes, and this period was followed by a salutary reaction wrought by the sore trials which the upper classes had to suffer. It is far more fatal when the relaxation of morals lays hold of the lower classes. In Russia the wife never occupied a position such as that which she enjoyed amongst the old Germans; in the sixteenth

century she was, even at the Czar's court, esteemed no more highly than she is to-day in the countries of the East. She was confined to her own apartments, and only appeared on festive occasions, in order to pass the cup to the guest; she was still partly the husband's slave. Until quite recently traces of this former position could still be found, not amongst the peasants only, but amongst the rich Moscow merchants as well. For the peasant the wife is, even to-day, the slave, the worker, and they, the wives and daughters, consider themselves as such; they suffer blows and do the work of slaves without feeling the loss of their dignity. The wife is looked upon with but little respect, and her marriage duty consists far more in serving her husband than in fidelity. The relations between the sexes are very loose. The men migrate in the summer to seek work, the women in the meantime take in soldiers as lodgers if there are any to be had; in consequence of this there were legions of illegitimate soldiers' children as long as the custom of quartering the troops in the villages still prevailed, owing to there being no barracks. Or the wives and daughters were hired for the harvest by a landowner, frequently in a distant province. Thus hundreds of women suddenly made their appearance in the merry summer days; they camped in hay-lofts and barns, and, of course, all the men came flocking from far and near to the dance and love-making. "What do I care," said one of these landed proprietors to me about twelve years ago. "Of course things are pretty bad, but in September the whole horde leaves again by the railway and there is an end of it and my harvest has been brought in." How long ago is it that in the village the head of the family lived with his son-in-law, daughter-in-law, with grand-children and great grand-children in one house, upon one farm, three, four, five families together, and the head of the family in a most patriarchal manner not only claimed his own wife as his own, but also the wives of his sons and grandsons? In reading to-day of the loose relations existing between men and women

one is reminded of Japanese morals. This looseness of morals is particularly serious on account of sexual diseases which have appeared in recent times. This scourge has spread far, and has, in common with the brandy, undermined the health and strength of the peasant.

Worse however, is the fact that the ties between parents and children have been loosened. The newborn infant is generally, from the very first day, not treated with love but as a burden ; it lies in a box suspended by a hook and is rocked there by the foot of the knitting mother, or by the brother, until it falls asleep, or it is put to sleep with the ever-ready poppy juice. It is brought up in a pestilential atmosphere upon the most inferior kind of food ; it has no strength and easily pines away if Nature has not endowed it with an iron constitution. For this reason one half or more of the children die at an early age, and the increase of the population has come to a standstill, as I mentioned before. But the moral phenomenon is the lack of love in the mother for her child. She may be tender at times and overwhelm it with sweet words, but the next moment she ill-treats and curses it, and, if her poverty be great, lets it starve and perish. If only God would take it away ! We do not need it, it cannot work, it is good for nothing ! And God in the end *does* take it. It is buried, the priest crosses himself over the grave and the mother tries to shed a few tears of respectability. The weakening of the mother's love—this, when it appears as a national characteristic, is a sign of terrible degradation, far worse than so-called loose morals in the relation of the sexes. This phenomenon, too, must be traced back to the prevailing poverty.

It is not difficult to discover the seat of these moral carbuncles in the nation. In a former chapter I have quoted the descriptions of a correspondent of the *Grashdanin* who is astonished at the well-being, at the order in the Russian villages on the lower Volga, which have been founded in the Steppe country of the Kirghizes. The correspondent at first sight imagined

himself to be in a settlement of sectarians, so favourably did these villages compare with those in Old Russia. This shows how deep seated in him and in everybody else is the experience that everything looks different in a village of sectarians than in one of orthodox Russians ; and certainly it has long been well-known all over Russia that the sectarian is a man who does not drink, nor smoke, who is economical and thrifty, and more industrious than the orthodox Russian. Why ? Here dogma does not play an important part, for the great mass of the Russians who do not belong to the State Church, are so-called "old believers," followers of the old Orthodox Church as it existed before the reforms of the seventeenth century, a Church which does not differ from the State Church of to-day in its dogma, but only in—from a spiritual point of view—unimportant external rites. These old believers cling more rigidly even than those of the State Church to empty forms. They are inspired even less than the latter by a living spirit of religion in their church ; and yet a slight formal divergence works great moral differences. Usually amongst sectarians the old believers are not included, only those who seceded from the State Church at a later period. But these old believers distinguished themselves in a certain degree by the same moral peculiarities from the followers of the State Church as the sectarians. It is clear that the important point is not what they believe but how they believe it. In the one case dogmas are upheld by compulsion and bring no moral blessing ; in the other they are valued from free choice as something individual, as a privilege of the spirit, and the struggles and the sacrifices which they entail enhance their spiritual value and vitality. The mere fact that the old believers were, and are being persecuted, that they are conscious of guarding by their own strength their religious treasures, the feeling that they must suffer for the sake of these treasures, sanctifies and spiritualises them. They are brought socially nearer to one another, they help each other,

they protect one another; thus the moral element becomes active and ennobles the spiritual life in the parish and in the family. The old believer stands on an altogether higher moral plane than the orthodox Russian, and has thus reached a higher degree of prosperity.

When, in addition, the sectarians proper are pervaded by a real living, religious faith, the change in their moral character becomes more marked, more decisive. Under Alexander I. the English Bible Society, invited and fostered by the Minister, Golozin, penetrated into the country; the Bible was translated into the Russian popular tongue instead of the Slavonic Church tongue, unintelligible to the people, and made accessible in many other languages to the various peoples of the Russian Empire. For a long time it had but little effect, because the mass of the people could not read it. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Bible followed in the track of the knowledge of reading and writing in the Russian village. It worked, and works, far more powerfully than all the Nihilists, and if the Holy Synod wishes to be consistent in its policy of spiritual enslavement it must begin by checking the distribution of the Bible. The origin of the "Stunde," from the prayer hour of the German Menonites and other evangelical German colonist meetings, is well-known. The religious sense of the Russian, brooding for centuries over empty forms, combined with the equally repressed longing for spiritual life—these quickly seized upon the liberating power of a simple and practical living religious doctrine, and the "Stundist" movement spread rapidly over the whole south of the Empire. Wherever a Bible in the Russian language is to be found in the village, there a circle rapidly forms around its learned owner; he is listened to eagerly, and the Word has its effect.

Apart from the "Stunde," other sects have existed for a long time, raised from evangelical soil, such as the Molokanes and Duchoborzs, and latterly the Paschkovinians. Paschkov, a colonel of the Guards, who died in Paris at the beginning of 1902, started in

the "eighties" a movement in St Petersburg, which was essentially evangelical, with a methodistical tinge, and which soon seized upon all the strata of the population in the capital. Substantially it was a religious revival from the dry-as-dust Greek Church similar to that which in the sixteenth century turned against the Romish Church in Germany and in Switzerland. The Gospel was to Paschkov himself new, good tidings, and as such he carried it into the distinguished circles which he assembled at his palace on the Neva, and as such he brought it amongst the crowds of cabmen, labourers, laundresses, etc., whom he called from the streets to hear the news. Paschkov's name was known by the last crossing-sweeper, and many thousands blessed him, some because they had been moved by the religious spirit which glowed in him, others because they knew of the many charitable institutions which he had founded with his own means and with the help of rich men and women friends. I myself shall never forget the few hours which I spent in conversation with this man, simple in spirit as in education, but so rich in religious feeling and in true humility. To me he could offer nothing new, for all that to him was new I, the son of Lutheran parents, had known from my childhood days. But what was new to me was the phenomenon of a man who had belonged for fifty years to a Christian Church and had only now discovered as something new what is familiar to every member of an evangelical community as the sum and substance of Christian teaching. To him the Gospel itself was something new, a revelation.

This has been the case of many thousands in the Russian Empire when they opened the Bible for the first time. The spark flew from village to village and took fire, because the people were thirsting for a spiritual religious life, because it brought comfort in their material misery and food for their minds. In a few years everybody was astounded at the moral and material change wrought by the influence of the Stunde. Sober, industrious, honest, economical, observing order and

decency even outwardly—thus the evangelical sectarian distinguished himself from the member of the State Church, whether he was a Stundist, a Monokane, a follower of Tolstoi or of Paschkov. Holy Vladmir, with his Byzantine priests, brought no living Christianity into the land, and the common Russian had not been brought into contact with it during the nine hundred years which have elapsed since. Wherever it penetrates to-day with the Bible, there its effect is apparent. It is such as the best Government could not accomplish by worldly means alone. But it is diametrically opposed to the State Church; it leads to secession from orthodoxy, and the State has entered upon a crusade against it.

It is sufficiently well known with what rigour Monokanes and Duchoborzs have been proceeded against for years; how they are told to pack up and are sent into desert tracks, beyond the Caspian Sea, where, destitute, meanless, and without work they are kept alive by English gifts, by the collections which Count Tolstoi and other humanitarians are making on their behalf. Since then has come the turn of the Stundists, who are now being persecuted everywhere, whose prayer-meetings are forbidden by the police, against whom the Church stirs up her clergy and the entire youth of the Church schools. It is called missionary work, but it is the suppressing of evangelical Christianity. Paschkov's work, too, has been destroyed, his charitable institutions were closed, he himself was banished.

Nothing more pernicious to the health of the nation can be thought of than this violent subjugation of the national soul which cries for air. The coarse fibre of this people would not be touched so easily by good national schools (even if they could be created) as by the unfettering of the conscience by the liberation of the religious instinct. Bound in their external life by the "Mir" and the communal ownership of land, in their inner life by the withdrawal of all spiritual and intellectual food, how are these people to turn away from the road to perdition? Years ago, in the days of serfdom, they led a wild existence without reflection, a simple, un-

spiritual, and yet, in itself, harmonious life. To-day every glance shows to them the deep chasm from which they look up to the creations of civilised life in Europe, and the vivid contrast stirs up even the simple-minded man to thinking about himself and about his surroundings. The old harmony is gone and the burden of existence is keenly felt because it is recognised. Take away the power of the Church and the coercion of agrarian legislation and the good results would become apparent very soon. No Government alms, no agrarian schools, none of all these innumerable quack remedies invented in the chancelleries in order to avoid the fulfilment of necessary tasks, can ever check the growing misery, unless first of all these two principal measures are decided upon.

Stifling vapours arise from a fetid swamp. The flabbiness of molluscs is apparent in these figures and we see them driven to drunkenness, to crimes against their will, almost without passion, without fear of punishment, the victims of fate, not the bearers of a strong and evil will ; not evil by nature but following their instincts blindly ; not corrupted by life but without any sort of moral education or ideas derived from experiences ; not torn or driven by the necessity or the desires inspired by chaotic social surroundings, but following without a will mere inclinations and promptings ; they seem like neglected children left to themselves in a dark den. Yet, in spite of all good and gifted children, who might be raised by their innate good feelings to noble deeds, who bow down to the ground before the nobleman, the Mighty One, and who nevertheless rise again with the quiet self-confidence of equals and who show in words and bearing nothing mean and servile. There is a curious mixture in the Russian peasant ; he lets himself be almost ill-treated to death, he suffers everything ; physically, spiritually, morally he shows an enviable strength to bear and to suffer ; he often astonishes us by his quiet dignity, this simple savage, he frequently shows extraordinary moral grandeur. But it is as though the sinews of active

strength were severed ; there is no individual character, no firm personality, no strength of will. The dictates of the parish, the commands of authorities, the will of the Czar ; apart from these three powers there exists in his breast no clear consciousness of his own independence. One often sees in him the descendant of a great and free people ; judging his actions, his life, his desires, he appears as the victim of long servitude, or as the son of a people who have no future.

## CHAPTER X

### POVERTY AND FAMINE

IN a country so extensive as that part of the Russian Empire with which we are here concerned, and so varied as regards its natural conditions, in spite of outward uniformity, there cannot fail to be a great diversity of local conditions caused by differences of soil, of peoples, of geographical position, etc. Small Russia and New Russia mostly compare favourably with Central Russia. They suffer less from the communal ownership of land, which has here thrown off its stifling form, if not in theory at least in practice; in Small Russia the guarantorship for the taxes does not exist. Strong German immigration has contributed to the revival of farming. Thus prosperity is far greater here than in the Centre, and occasional failures of crops consequently less disastrous. These are Frontier Provinces, which are to some extent influenced by communication with the West. In the Centre, and in the East also, there are to be seen here and there rich villages or well-to-do peasant proprietors. There are great families with splendid estates. These are the exception, however, not the rule. All accounts, even the official ones, testify to a gradual decrease in the prosperity of this district, and this is confirmed by ever-recurrent famines. Even if we had not these testimonies we would have to draw from what we know of soil and labour, these two principal factors of all economic life, the conclusion, that in these districts economic conditions are very unfavourable.

The Russian field, says Lochtin, shows unmistakable

signs of great exhaustion ; a lack of valuable properties of the soil, and the failures of crops, are a consequence of this exhaustion.<sup>1</sup> This is the almost universal opinion upon the subject, which is only opposed by that of the Financial Minister, according to which bad weather, drought, rain or frost alone are the occasional and unavoidable causes of bad harvest.<sup>2</sup> The most ignorant farmer will realise that after the ruthless cultivation to which the peasants' fields have been subjected for centuries, and which, since the construction of railways, has also been practised upon the immense private properties of the Black Earth, which have been turned into arable land, exhaustion must set in. It is surprising to hear the Minister say<sup>3</sup> that it is a sign of the growing prosperity of the tax-payer that in the years preceding 1897 such enormous quantities of corn were raised and could be exported at low prices, whilst everything goes to show that these quantities were produced, and could be exported at low prices, owing to two causes—i.e., greatly-increased ruthless cultivation and increasing poverty. In the bad year of 1897, which the Minister considered merely as a passing phenomenon, official data were at hand on which could be based another view of the matter. The *Moscow Viedom* gave the following account, from official sources,<sup>4</sup> concerning the great district of the Volga with its comparatively virgin soil : “ Not long ago the Volga district was the corn store of Russia, but in the last two or three decades the situation has changed considerably ; almost every year the population requires grants for its subsistence.” In this large district a decrease in the power of production made itself felt. In comparing the average yield of the harvest in the province of Samara during the decade 1883-92 with that which had been considered the average formerly, the following are the figures for each kind of corn :—

<sup>1</sup> P. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Budget Reports of the Minister for 1898 and 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Budget Report for 1898.

<sup>4</sup> Account of the *St Petersburg Gazette*.

	Normal Harvest.			Average Harvest during the Years 1883-92.		
Rye . . .	41.7	Pood from Dessatin		30.4	Pood from Dessatin	
Winter Wheat .	30.8	"	"	27.6	"	"
Summer Wheat .	34.7	"	"	25.5	"	"
Oats . . .	33.8	"	"	26.5	"	"
Barley . . .	33.5	"	"	18.7	"	"
Bearded Wheat .	35.6	"	"	23.5	"	"
Buck Wheat .	26.6	"	"	21.5	"	"
Millet . . .	32.9	"	"	19.0	"	"
Peas . . .	31.9	"	"	23.4	"	"
Potatoes . . .	301.9	"	"	213.6	"	"

These official figures show that in the province of Samara a strong decline in the productive power of all kinds of grain is observable. The same phenomenon repeats itself in the neighbouring provinces. Under these circumstances it is obvious that it is useless for the Government to restrict itself to the support of the necessitous, since the difficulties are thus only removed temporarily and not the root of the evil struck at. It is necessary to study seriously the means for the amelioration of the primary conditions of agricultural production, in order to strengthen the much-shaken economic prosperity in the province of the Volga.

From this very district "*Famished Russia*" brought us last year harrowing descriptions. Large villages in which the entire population lie famished in their huts, in which there are no mice from want of food, no cats owing to absence of mice, no dogs because they have starved—these are conditions which would perhaps find their parallel in the famished provinces of India and which are prevalent probably for similar reasons. Other accounts tell us how in some villages the inhabitants train themselves to do without food by falling into a kind of winter sleep, and by moving as little as possible, whereby the waste in their bodies is arrested and a saving in food and fuel effected. Such conditions, of course, are neither general nor continuous.

But a population which merely approaches such conditions must necessarily lose much of its capacity for work. During the last ten years the purely agricultural provinces of the East and of the Centre have very nearly approached such conditions.

How could a peasant class prosper upon such poor quality and such small quantity of labour? The Russian peasant is not trained to work; he works without real zest, he is wanting in steadiness and in perseverance, he does not care to work continuously, and not longer than is absolutely necessary in order to provide for the next few days. Yonder, in the district of the Black Earth, however, he only finds occupation during the summer, and even this is much shortened by festivals. In the winter he is rarely able to earn a few kopecks, and his labour is as superficial as his entire mode of farming. The soil, however, only gives its choicest blessing, moral strength, to the man who through long years has toiled with the sweat of his brow upon it, who has grown one with it and to whom the clod of earth is part of his very being. Peasant and nobleman here are not farmers in our sense of the term. They do not lose themselves in their work, they do not wrestle with the soil for its fruits, they do not observe minutely, they have not the patience to work for years towards one goal, even when they have recognised that goal. The peasant has never been able to grow one with the soil because it does not belong to him but to the commune. He clings to the village, not to his piece of land, since it is not really his own; just as the nobleman only cares about his income, not about his estates. The peasant, on the contrary, who calls a clod of earth his own, loves it as a husbandman. The village peasant who has no property of his own is half a nomad and the cultivation of the soil is nomad-like. The richest corn-land in Europe is thus in the hands of a people with but little aptitude for farming. Thus it happens that the productiveness of agriculture in Russia is smaller than in other countries, for practical as well as abstract reasons. This reflects upon the

morality ; it exhausts and unnerves the people. The Russian is not made to progress of his own accord or on his own behalf, but rather by the help of others or by that of the Government. Individual efforts are only made by a few, the mass of the people moving on best in a mass, or at the words of authority. The general complaints, so says Nowikow, about the disorder in the village, about the poverty of the peasant, about his thriftlessness, about the incompetency of the village authority and of the Wolost,<sup>1</sup> the fist — all these have one common root : the habit acquired through centuries of yielding to outward pressure, without the least independence on the part of the peasant. Willlessness, passive obedience, formerly towards the bondmaster, now towards the policeman, the head of the province, etc., and finally towards the commune and its elders, but nowhere any independent personal will, any initiative apart from the will and actions of the commune at large. This it is that enervates the character of the people and prompts tyrannical natures to take advantage of the weakness of the masses and to turn into the "fists." It is this quality which has made the Russian peasant into the excellent soldier, as which he is well known ; he is blind in his obedience, he freezes to death on the Shipka Pass because he has been placed there and been forgotten ; in battle he has to be shot dead man by man, because, when beaten, he does not easily turn back, as long as the command for retreat has not been given. What is a virtue in the soldier is, however, a defect in the free labourer, if this quality of indifference is rooted in the character, in the passive nature of the man. This want of independence is now a national characteristic ; if not originally so it has become one in the course of history. And this history, this education for laziness, by enslavement and by bad government, is going on even to-day. Even to-day Church and State are of opinion that it is better to remind the peasant, by an increasing number of feast-

<sup>1</sup> Wolost is an enlarged village commune formed by several communes joined in one under especial peasant autonomy.

days and holidays, of the sanctity of the Church and of the authority of the State than to keep him at work and away from the public-house by the abolition of these feast-days. Yea, much more than formerly, the nobleman, the official of to-day, represses all independence of character.

A soil exhausted by agriculture, an enervated physique, paralysed activity of the State and Church, a spiritual and material civilisation which has stood still for the last 500 years—these are conditions which render any competition with other countries in the domain of agriculture most unfavourable. But the State does nothing to strengthen this industry, this productive power. Rather the reverse. The holidays cost the country enormous sums. Assuming merely that of 126 million inhabitants, on an average 60 million able workmen alone do work every day to the value of twenty kopecks, then the wealth of the nation is deprived by every holiday of a profit of 12 million roubles. The Russian of the farming districts has, as can be read everywhere, 150 or more holidays, therefore 90 more than the Western European. Of these, it must be said, those which fall within the winter season would be compulsory in any case, even if one wished to dispense with them altogether. However, the tendency in official circles is by no means to rid the workman of them, but rather to augment their numbers and thus idleness is on the increase, even in those districts which are not purely agricultural, and which have no orthodox population; thus the latter are obliged, apart from their Catholic and Protestant holidays, to observe orthodox Saints' days as well as other non-religious days which they did not keep formerly. Calculated in money, the loss of labour caused in this manner by the authorities would amount to large sums, and if to this be added the amount the workman spends in brandy on such days, the loss resulting to the nation every year from these holidays is not rated too highly at 100 million roubles. The Treasury makes a profit by the brandy consumption and

the Church by the "gifts." How profitable these gifts are, not alone to the Church but also to the Treasury, is shown by the following description in a paper which appears at Perm. The priest or deacon fixes a certain day for the presentation of gifts.

"And behold, when day and hour have arrived, the people bring whatever happens to be at their disposal in the way of provisions—bread, wood, tea, sugar, etc. The 'little father' receives them all most kindly and gives them something good to drink. Reception and gifts stand in a certain relationship to one another; the better the former the more abundant the presents of the peasants. Last summer a new deacon was inducted into the village Woskressenskoje, who, as the change was financially disadvantageous to him, was of course dependent upon the gifts. He therefore had a talk with the members of his congregation, convinced them, and fixed the date upon which the costly gifts were to flow into the house. And indeed it was for him a most profitable day, although he had spent in brandy alone 25 roubles. The guests, however, scratched their heads afterwards, for, carried away by the liberality of the deacon, many a one had given away almost his last possession, and the following day he had into the bargain, at his own expense, to get rid of the effects of his booze. Where brandy is being drunk there is, of course, no lack of quarrelling and of fighting, and for this reason the gifts are by no means a pleasing episode, and their discontinuance would be most desirable."<sup>1</sup>

Thus everything points again and again to the causes which carry in their train the material as well as the moral decay of the nation's strength in the provinces of Great Russia, and especially in the purely agricultural districts. Experience confirms this indication. The fact that in those Eastern and Central districts the bad years follow each other more and more rapidly is indisputable. Lochtin counts, from 1885 to 1899, seven failures of crops; Schwanebach counts between

<sup>1</sup> From *St Petersburg Gazette*.

1888 and 1898 (inclusive) four years in which the Government had to support the population of the richest corn districts at the expense of the State.<sup>1</sup> The year 1901 also has to register a famine which chiefly comprises these same Central and Eastern Provinces which were visited before by bad harvests. During this last year the failure of crops was not by any means prevalent in the Black Earth district, although only 22 of its provinces suffered by it. Seventeen provinces and a few districts in Western Siberia were supported by the State. Part of this same district, with a famished population of 12 to 16 millions,<sup>2</sup> was visited by Messrs Lehmann and Parvus in order to observe the famine of 1897 and 1898. The account of these gentlemen, as well as the statements of many Russian professors and laymen upon the same subject, taken together, show, beyond a doubt, that the famines return, and will return, with ever-increasing severity. In other parts of the Empire also, even in the Frontier Provinces, failures of crops of similar dimensions appear as in the Centre and in the East ; but there the population is able to pull through without State aid, not on account of a better soil or of more frequent rains, but thanks to better labour and greater thrift. In the Centre the economic body is too exhausted, and thus the bad harvests become chronic.

I have pointed out more than once how justifiable a suspicious attitude towards Russian statistics is. Those accounts, however, in which the endeavour is rather to represent things more favourably than the reverse are of some value. Amongst these statements I include the more or less official ones. The above-mentioned investigation by high financial officials in the district of the Central Black Earth<sup>3</sup> entirely confirmed the impoverishment of these districts ; it is traced to three principal causes : the lack of any sort of incidental earnings apart from farming, the consequent lack of

<sup>1</sup> *Schwanebach*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> From accounts in *Famished Russia*.

<sup>3</sup> Polenow.

employment during one half of the year, and, finally, to excessive taxation, by which the country is deprived (for purposes of State) of much more than the State returns to it. Thus it appears that from 1894 to 1898 the Central Black Earth district paid into the Exchequer 106·4 million roubles per annum on an average and received only 42·8 millions back ; the East provided 80 millions and received only 59·2 million roubles back. The report sees in this unjust taxation, although, for instance, the South also provided 102·6 millions and received only 64·8 millions, and other districts show similar returns. The report reveals the tendency to support those impoverished districts at the expense of the richer ones ; that is to say, to resort to the old system of mechanical bureaucratic assistance, without striking at the real root of the evil—bad farming, communal ownership of land and the want of initiative. The results of this conference of experts is refuted by an important expert journal<sup>1</sup> with the following explanations :—

“ It is quite wrong to restrict the decadence of peasant cultivation to the nine Central Provinces of the Black Earth. Even when taking into account the symptoms alone upon which the Conference bases its diagnosis, this very same diagnosis must be applied to the peasant conditions in a number of other districts. The great accumulation of arrears of taxation is by no means a particular characteristic of the Centre ; on the contrary, in the Eastern Provinces this process has made even greater headway. A decrease in horse-breeding and a subsequent increase in teamless farms can be proved in the Eastern as well as in some Southern Provinces. A decrease in the consumption of victuals amongst the peasant population is stated by specialists to be a fact, not only in the Centre but also in the West and in the Frontier districts, which, according to the Conference, boast of favourable economic conditions. Even the blessed South of Russia has suffered by the general process of impoverishment of the peasant population ;

<sup>1</sup> *Russkoje Bogatstvo.*

New Russia and Bessarabia, with their splendid soil, their fine climate and their sparse population, have experienced within the last few years failures of crops which have completely shaken the prosperity of their peasants.

Schwanebach quotes for 1893 the arrears in taxes at  $119\frac{1}{3}$  millions, of which 110 millions fall to the share of the Central and Eastern districts.<sup>1</sup> Issajew quotes for 1896 about  $146\frac{1}{2}$  millions, whilst 8 millions of arrears had been remitted in the year 1895. This gives within three years an increase of  $22\frac{5}{8}$  millions, of which 20 millions may be ascribed to the Centre and to the East. According to the Budget for 1900 the arrears up to the 1st January 1899 amounted in the whole Empire, after new remissions and fresh estimates, to 116 millions. As I have stated before, the entire arrears of payments due on purchase bonds amounted up to the 2nd January 1901 to 250 million roubles, of which a great part again falls to the share of the Centre and of the East. The State has supported those districts

In the year 1891-1892 with 162 millions

1898	"	35	"
1901	"	10	" <sup>2</sup>

Together, with 207 millions.

If, then, the arrears and remissions of arrears up to the 1st January 1899 for the Centre and East are estimated at only 120 millions, the State must have paid to these provinces (since the payment of the unremitted arrears is not to be relied upon) 327 millions, and of these 207 millions in the course of the last ten years. To these would have to be added the arrears from the 1st January 1899 to the 1st January 1902, which surely must have increased greatly in the 22 provinces of the Black Earth, probably by the whole

<sup>1</sup> *Schwanebach*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the Budget Report of this year, which estimates the grants to the necessitous in the whole of the Empire at 20 millions. Of these at least 10 millions may be placed to the account of the Centre and of the East.

amount of taxes for the two years ; thus several tens of millions must be added to those 327 millions. For if, according to more recent reports, the arrears since 1896 have increased by 153½ million roubles, and apparently in purchase-bonds, one may cheerfully write 350 million roubles instead of 327. If one wishes to assume, as does the above-mentioned official commission, that the State keeps, for its general requirements, too great a portion of the taxes in those provinces, one cannot but admit that this excess has been amply returned to them during the last ten years with 327-350 millions. It would therefore be neither just nor judicious, although it might be bureaucratically convenient, to increase the support given to the Centre and to the East by the rest of the country, since everything else is left as before.

How little Government assistance in money alone is capable of improving conditions as wretched as those revealed in these districts may be inferred from *Famished Russia*. I am, however, adding the testimony of two Russian writers, who are carried away neither by party zeal nor by the zeal of their profession, and whose testimony forces upon us the same conviction as that given by this thrilling and yet trustworthy book. The political economist, Golowin, who took part in the above-mentioned investigation in the Centre under Kowalewski, writes :<sup>1</sup> "Thus the splendid façade of our economic conditions has a very miserable backyard. On the one hand unmistakable signs of development, a rapid increase of the State revenue, revival of the manufacturing industries, extension of the net of railways, increasing net receipts of the railways in spite of reductions in the passenger fares, and also expansion of foreign trade. On the other hand, the gradual decline of the harvests in the Centre of the country in the most fertile districts, and at the same time palpable signs of the growing poverty of the two agricultural classes, the increasing arrears of the peasant<sup>2</sup> and the mortgaging of private landed property,

<sup>1</sup> *Golowin*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, in taxes and redemption of purchase-bonds.

the continual increase of the rural proletariat, the stagnation of the inland trade, and, finally—as the result of all this—a standstill in the increase of the population of Central Russia. How are these apparently contradictory phenomena to be reconciled? How is it to be explained that the State grows richer and strengthens its economic position whilst that of its subjects in a large part of the country more and more approaches decadence? that the impoverished population is capable of paying for ever-increasing Budgets, that manufactories are growing, and simultaneously the cash in the Savings Bank, whilst the chief industry and the capacity of the population for increase are declining steadily?

A voice is heard from an entirely different political camp—it is that of the familiar Rural Captain, Nowikow.<sup>1</sup>

He bases his knowledge upon a number of articles which appeared in the Conservative Nationalist newspaper, *Grashdanin*, on the agricultural conditions in the interior of the Empire, and gives, amongst others the following quotations: "The entire contemporaneous rural life—that of the peasant as well as of the landed proprietor—is a mass of contradictions and of dark, impenetrable nonsense. Enormous distances without passable roads, cut by smart railway embankments; dilapidated country palaces side by side with innumerable thatched huts; a rich soil which does not even return the seed corn; prehistoric ploughs and other agricultural implements which kill off the horses; famished horses and cows upon immense stretches of meadowlands; a pious, physically strong people, who feast and drink during 150 days in the year; churches which do not improve morals; schools in which reading and writing is not learnt; rural councils forged together of haphazard parties who hate one another; isolation reigning upon the barren tracts of farmlands; spiritual famine increased by physical hunger; a universal, all-pervading feeling of hostility, of self-seeking, of terror;

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches, etc.*, p. 191.

and above all this is heard the moan of the Russian ploughman, carried by the winds from the North, from the South, from the West and from the East, "Save himself who can!" Does not this sound incredible if one remembers that Russia is an autocratic and agricultural country, and the Russian himself a pious and talented man, hardy in adversity? If the root is decayed no luxurious branches can flourish, and Nowikow adds: "In reading this you are seized with an irresistible shudder, and the doubt arises within you whether it can be true. Alas! anyone who lives in a village, who loves his country honestly, feels that the writer, although he did not spare the colours, is right nevertheless."

The Financial Minister cannot ignore these ever-recurrent complaints. He himself calculates (Budget Report for 1902) the loss which the failures of crops of the last five years have caused to the population at a 1000 million roubles; but from the satisfactory influx of the Government revenue, and from the rapid growth of expenditure, he infers that the general welfare of the country has not decreased on the whole. If the losses which industries have sustained in these five years were calculated in a manner similar to these 1000 millions, another loss of 2000 millions would probably be arrived at. Is it permissible to assume that Russia can afford to lose within five years such sums as these without her prosperity suffering thereby? Would not rather some scepticism as regards the figures of the Central Statistical Committee be justified, upon which the calculation of the minister is based? And does one not become the more sceptical in view of the optimism with which the Minister, at the loss of each 1000 millions, only makes the observation, "that this proves how mighty an influence upon the economic position of the country and upon the inland markets the next plentiful harvest may have"? Thus a landed proprietor, overwhelmed with debts, might console himself during bad years; but for a statesman such hopefulness is dangerous—if it is genuine.

Is it possible to remedy a state of things such as that described above by a remission of taxes and by money grants only? Is the "care of the people," of which the State has recently relieved the "provinces," in order to place it into the hands of officials, alone sufficient? This is most improbable. Yet this decline of Great Russia is a serious matter for the whole Empire. If things continue as at present the centre of gravity in the Empire must gradually shift. The real power of the State has been vested until now in the 80 million Russians, and these had their national centre in these very districts of Great Russia. If the economic and cultural centre of gravity becomes shifted more and more towards the frontier, a national policy which turns all non-Russian elements of the Empire into enemies of the State becomes more and more questionable. Here the interests of the Government and of the nation clash.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MIDDLE CLASSES

#### *Town Life, Schools, Revolutionaries, Art, Literature*

IN Moscovitic Russia there never has existed any citizenship in the European sense of the term ; there never were any towns with an independent Government, or with even communal independence, and which possessed a population skilled in trade and industries as in warfare. This was by no means the fault of the Mongols, whom one is very prone in Russia of crediting with every sort of historical evil ; but it is their heirs and successors, the Grand Dukes of Moscow, who are at fault, as in so many other respects. Before their days, when 72 princes and a few town republics—the only citizenships in our sense of the word which have ever existed in Russia—shared the possession of Russia between them, towns sprang up just as in Germany or in Italy, patronised by these princes, and often in lively intercourse with the West. The Grand Duchy of Moscow put an end to everything of this sort ; to the princes with their towns, the republics with their free citizenship organised after the European model. Equality and slavery for all took their place. Where to-day the ruins of old walls encircle Russian towns, there, 500 or more years ago, sprouted the young shoots of a township ; where such mediæval walls were not, there the artisan or trader could not withstand the nobles and princes. Civic existence in the Middle Ages was inseparable from tower and wall, and when, after the princes, these walls, and with them

the liberties, the privileges, of Naugard and Pleskau, fell, the seeds of real civilisation in the country were destroyed, but the foundations of the tinsel edifice which we see to-day were laid.

Next to the despotism of Moscow with its trade monopoly it is the nature of the country which has been adverse to the growth of civic life. It is the lack of land which drives the modern peasant into the towns, and did so centuries ago. In Russia there never has been this lack. If the peasant feels crowded to-day, and does not prefer to starve to death, he moves to Siberia or into the Kirghiz Steppe; 600 years ago he had no need of wandering so far in order to settle down on new soil. When, later, the allotment system and finally serfdom were introduced by Moscow, the peasant could no longer exchange his plot of land for the town. Only the fugitives, whom increasing pressure, and finally the savagery of Peter the Great, drove by tens of thousands across the frontier, might perhaps, by founding towns in the South, have obtained the external conditions for a civic organisation, if they had not, living as they did in constant feud with Tartars, Turks, Poles and Russians, been obliged to devote themselves entirely to warfare. The settlements of the Cossacks, however, have from the very first borne traits which only outwardly differ from those found in the Russian peasant. The democratic spirit is common to both, and the distinguishing feature of the Cossacks, their love of liberty, is the fruit of liberty itself. The Ssetsche of the Dnieper Cossacks, this fortified camp of celibate warriors, whose bell, like that of Naugard, called the Cossacks to the Council, whose rulers were chosen by the people, would perhaps in another people have led to civic forms of life. The bell and Ssetsche are even to-day the tokens of the privileges of freedom which the Cossacks on the Dnieper, Don and Ural remember. They are proud of the privileges remaining to them. Frequently enough in history the risings of the Cossacks have furnished proofs of their self-consciousness and their love of

liberty. But it is the love of liberty of the nomad rather than that of the citizen ; and this careless, nomad spirit, so characteristic of the Russian in general, is more pronounced in the Cossack than in the Russian peasant. In the Cossack the national characteristics are preserved, and so it is that in spite of his great love of liberty he has never advanced far enough to be the founder of townships and of a civic life.

Every attempt at a citizenship in old Russia was made under the influence of foreign elements—of Germans in the North and West, of Turks and Tartars in the East. But they were unable to reach their full development under the tyranny of Moscow, and it seems as though modern life only, with its growth of industries, would open up a future for the development of a town life. During the last ten years the industrial centres have attracted many people. The workmen in towns are said to number 2 millions, the number of skilled workmen is on the increase, trade occupies an ever-growing number of men, the learned professions gain in importance. Undoubtedly, compared with former days, a beneficent revival of the middle classes has taken place, as is evident from the strong influx into educational establishments. All this, of course, brings in its train an increase of the town population. The latter, however, does not take place evenly in the whole of the Empire, but only in the centres of industries and commerce. The industrial district of Moscow and Vladimir heads the list ; apart from this district town life only increases at a few points, and these are nearly all situated on the outskirts of the Empire. The reason for this is to be found principally in the fact that since the completion of the set of railways the inland trade has decreased as against foreign trade. The great selling transactions take place in the foreign trade with its export of quantities of raw material, and this latter is concentrated in the export towns situated on the coasts and on the land frontier, whilst all inland purchase is made by agents. At these same points the import trade naturally also

concentrates. It is there, with the exception of the district of Moscow, that the young industries make headway; on the one hand, because here they find more free capital than in the provinces; on the other hand, because they are nearer to foreign countries, to the source from which the supplies of skilled foremen, semi-manufactured goods, much raw material and machinery, and also cheap and plentiful coal are obtainable. This is another example showing that great natural wealth alone does not suffice to enrich a country, but that this is effected by the people and their labour. The rich coal-fields of the Donez might supply the whole of Russia. The Government would perhaps be ready to defray the cost of freight to the harbour of the Baltic and to Poland by its railways, even at a loss; nevertheless, English and Prussian coal would not be ousted from the field, because the manufacturers cannot rely upon being supplied punctually by the railways, and therefore prefer foreign coal, even when it is more expensive.

Thus commerce and industries have settled in a circle around the Empire in St Petersburg, Reval, Riga, Libau, Warsaw, Lodz, Odessa, Kiev, Rostov, Baku, etc., and in Moscow-Vladimir. The two capitals with 1,200,000 inhabitants, Warsaw with more than 700,000; altogether, 74 towns with more than 30,000, and 16 towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants. This in itself is very little for a country of about ten times the area of Germany. Of these 16 larger towns, 10 are situated in the Western Frontier Provinces and on the coasts of the Baltic and of the Black Sea; in the interior of Great Russia proper there are only two. Trubnikow counted in the year 1895, in Russia, apart from Poland, Caucasia and Turkestan, 709 towns, the Budgets of which showed a revenue of 67 million roubles. This would give for each town a yearly revenue of 94,500 roubles on an average, and if the Budgets of the large towns, which amount to millions, are taken into account, only very little is left over for the yearly revenue of the great bulk of the towns.

Berlin had, in the year 1897-1898, a Budget of 88 million marks, and if all its institutions, such as gas and water works, slaughter-houses, market-halls, etc., are counted, its expenditure would amount to 157.7 million marks, *i.e.*, to much more than those 709 towns together have to expend. For 1902 the Budget of expenditure for the town of Berlin, inclusive of all its institutions, amounts to about 200 million marks. The town population of Russia is estimated to-day at 16,289,000, which represents 13 per cent. of the entire population. If Berlin is estimated at about 2 million inhabitants this would be the eighth part of the inhabitants of all Russian towns, and, estimated by the financial needs of Berlin, these Russian towns ought to expend about 800 million roubles per annum instead of 67 millions. But of these 709 towns only a very few can boast of real civic life. This means that the inland towns, and consequently also the civic element in them, are of slight importance, whilst the great centres have grown rapidly since 1895. St Petersburg has to-day a Budget of 17 million roubles. But this at the expense of all the other towns. Many of the provincial towns move backwards instead of forwards. On the other hand, along the railway lines, the beginnings of a number of new townships are observable. Perhaps too little importance is being attached by Press and literature to these new settlements in calculating the number of inhabitants with civic occupations. In February 1901 the *Novoie Vremja* wrote as follows:—

“It is a fact that at the present moment not only our villages, but even our district towns, are falling into decay. In the first place the number of their inhabitants has remained stationary in most of them for decades past. According to the figures of the census of 1897, the population, especially in Central and Northern Russia, has remained almost the same in many district towns, and in some of them it has even decreased considerably. So ancient a town as Uglitsch has, for instance, dropped from 13,000 inhabitants to 9000. As regards education, the district towns are

perhaps worse off than the country villages. One district school, and, in a favourable case, perhaps one town school, are the only means of education with a curriculum hardly adequate to the requirements of life. Postal communication has not progressed beyond the early stages."

Two or three times a week the post comes and nobody thinks of making a change in this state of things, although the organisation of a daily service would entail only a very moderate expenditure.

"No libraries, no reading-rooms, no theatre! If, by the initiative of a teacher, magic-lantern lectures are held in the most spacious building of the town, *i.e.*, the prison, this fact is mentioned in the papers. Social life is non-existent. In a number of towns there are not even clubs, and where they exist they are used by the local intelligence, which frequently consists entirely of drunkards, as a sort of high-class public-house. The urban legislation granted to these towns in 1879, in order to increase their independence, was quite beyond them and had to make room for the simplified town organisation of 1894. Decay is evident everywhere; the streets are overgrown with grass, the fences crooked, the little houses of the humbler inhabitants are half in ruins, here and there a broken window-pane, everywhere you see unused building plots. Trade and the revenue of the town are decreasing visibly and hopelessly. Everything which has been done for the welfare of the town—any bridges or civic institutions belonging to days gone by—are overgrown with grass and in need of thorough repair. As regards trade, market-halls, which once were full of life and which now are lying deserted, are of no rare occurrence."

As one of the causes of these sad phenomena the *Novoie Vremja* mentions the railways, which have avoided the district towns and created new trading centres. The author of this article, however, complains chiefly of the inordinate development of the capitals and other great towns.

The towns are burdened with taxes upon trade, upon

immovables, with the quartering of the military and by other taxes of the Government. They are deprived of one source of income after another in favour of the Treasury; the expenses, however, for the police, the military, the building of barracks, are being increased, so that even the capitals and large provincial towns are, in spite of their growth, hard pressed and unable to satisfy their most urgent needs except by contracting heavy debts. The smaller towns, without credit, can do nothing for their advancement, because they have scarcely enough left to pay for a few street policemen and lanterns. More, however, than by the growth of the capitals the development of town life in the provinces is checked by the decay of agriculture and the poverty of the rural population. Wherever there is increasing prosperity, as in the Baltic Provinces, in Finland and in Poland, there the provincial towns and district towns flourish and grow. How is it possible for municipal trade to flourish in provinces where nobility and peasant alike are bankrupt, where every few years famines are raging? Who is to buy from the townsmen? An additional cause may possibly be sought in the general lack of independence of an established system, with regard to labour as well as to the needs of the Russians. The Russian is not a good workman, except as a farmer, but on the other hand he is a good tradesman. As a tradesman, however, he finds in the provincial town, with its miserable industries and poor inhabitants, very little scope for making a living, since the foreign trade is in the hands of middlemen in the ports. These towns produce nothing and do not trade; they are passive bodies, settlements of officials, meeting-places of the nobility, in which the most primitive needs of the country population are satisfied by retail business.

On the great water-way of the Volga six hundred steamers are plying, and thousands of smaller vessels, which form the means of communication. But how miserable are the few towns on the banks! Kazan, Oryol, Saratov—towns without life, with deserted

streets, with empty inns, museums without art, clubs without social life—everywhere organisations, spurious attempts, show without reality.

Not so in the large towns. There material and intellectual life centres in industries and commerce, in universities, colleges, in literature, in the Press. An exclusive citizenship, a corporation, are not to be found here either; the Government opposes such independent social organisations, as is shown by the urban legislation of 1879. But, after all, the town air has even here its revivifying influence, schools engender thought, critique; the ever-increasing number of men educated for teaching, for engineering, for Government service, create an intellectual, a public atmosphere. It would be difficult to define the conception of "intelligence" as it is prevalent in Russia to-day. To the disciples of the old reign this term embraces everybody who is unsympathetic to them, as a restless, modern, dogmatic element, harping on education and on superior knowledge, and in whom one may suspect more or less dangerous sentiments and political intrigues. Every student, and everybody who has been to the university and belongs to the "intelligence," is viewed with suspicion by the disciples of the old school and the opponents of importunate Europe. The foolish proceedings of the Nihilists have brought the students into bad repute, and have spread a contempt for intelligence which has only been wiped out quite recently by the increasing arbitrariness of officialism. A notion is dawning, however, that these intelligent elements alone represent power and independence, and might serve as a counterweight to arbitrariness. The reform of schools is to-day the most pressing question.

According to the Budget estimate there are to be spent in 1902, by the Treasury, altogether 74.8 million roubles upon education in all its branches. Of these about one-half will be claimed by military and other branch schools. The secondary schools only benefit to the extent of 10½ millions, and the primary schools by about 9 millions. These are small sums for 126 million

inhabitants. Hitherto the State expenditure upon education has been computed at about 40 kopecks per head. For 1902, according to the estimate of the Minister, it would rise to 59 kopecks. But this expenditure only benefits the middle and lower classes to a small extent. Trubnikow gives the entire number of schools in the Empire as 78,699, the *Moscow News* as 79,934. It is certain that a very small number only of the higher educational establishments profit by this State aid, and the lower you descend the less there is of it. But the greatest defect lies in the quality of these schools. The Russian teacher by no means possesses the qualifications expected in Germany by, say, a professor, a teacher at the "gymnasium" of a district school or of an elementary school. Scientifically he is only superficially trained; pedagogically he is not trained at all. With the exception of a certain number of teachers at the Higher Grade schools, the teachers are wanting in general culture and moral earnestness, which are even more important qualifications for this profession than general scientific efficiency. The teacher, too, feels himself to be, above all, a State official, and his gaze is directed on his superior, on the Government, on the various political currents, rather than upon the moral and intellectual education of his pupils. The number of Russian teachers who are scientifically trained is very small, and of this small number a great many are not employed for the Russian population, but as language teachers for Poles, Baltics, Caucasians, etc. There the Russian teacher is above all a language teacher and a national propagandist, and his particular subject, whether it be history, mathematics, or something else, is merely a secondary consideration. The best schools are even to-day a few German schools in St Petersburg and the schools in Finland, formerly they were the Baltic schools; these are, however, of small importance when considering the school education of the Russian middle and upper classes. Of the 79,934 schools of the Empire which are subject to the Government and to the Church, 12,132 fall to the share of the Department for

War, whose endeavour it is to supplement for the recruits the wretched teaching of the elementary schools. The most important class of school for Modern Russia, the secondary schools, are worst off. Kowalewski counts of these, for 1899, the following:—191 gymnasia, 53 pro-gymnasia, 115 technical schools. The question is, what sort of work is done in these? We have seen in a former chapter that in the so-called lower schools, from the district school downwards, they have to be satisfied with 7 kopecks per head. The secondary schools, the gymnasia, the pro-gymnasia, the technical schools (not counting the branch schools of the various departments) are supplied with, roughly,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million roubles, which works out at 8.3 kopecks per head. For the entire national education, with the exception of Higher Grade schools and branch schools, the State expends about 15 kopecks per head, or 100th part of its revenue. Truly a small item in a Budget the expenditure of which amounts to  $15\frac{1}{2}$  roubles per head of the population.

Education in Russia is, even amongst the upper classes, neither widespread nor profound. The striving for education amongst the younger generation is all the more keen and more general. Young Russia, especially of the middle class, is imbued with enthusiasm, perseverance, reverence for knowledge. The Russian students, men and women alike, in Germany and in Switzerland, show great industry, quickness of perception and an iron perseverance in bearing privations. They incline to over-estimation of their own person and of their acquired knowledge; they easily drift, like all Russians, into generalisation, and are fascinated by brilliancy, being brilliant themselves. They are inspired by a burning patriotism, and, as Nihilism has shown, are capable of sacrificing to their patriotic and political ideas energy, courage, renunciation. Their boisterous zeal has, particularly since the assassination of Alexander II., caused no end of evil even in their own interest to Russia. The Nihilistic attempts and the repeated revolutionary pin-pricks have supplied governing

officialism with a splendid excuse for arrogating the Government power to themselves, by arousing fear on the one hand and for increasing it on the other. It would, however, be unfair to deny that the condition of the country necessarily incites enthusiastic and generous minds to rebellion against the existing order of things. Such minds are mostly found amongst the youth raised by some slight school education to a higher level, and their inconsiderateness is checked by nothing; neither by office, nor family nor property. The Draconic measures of Alexander III. have restrained the mad outbreaks of revolutionary youth, ignoring altogether the true state of affairs. It is not probable, however, that revolutionary ferment has thus been permanently checked. Rather may it be assumed that the former Nihilists have recognised some of their mistakes and have learnt patience. The chief error in their calculation was that they imagined themselves capable of carrying away with them the lower classes, the peasants, because they were conscious of their own willingness to risk their lives for these people. They did not know the populace and had to learn by experience that it does not hesitate to slay its benefactors. Meanwhile a considerable number of workmen have collected in the industrial towns, meanwhile famine after famine has ravaged the country, and these masses of workmen no longer seem as opposed to the revolutionaries as the workmen of the "eighties"; moreover, these young revolutionaries no doubt observed that the moral system of bureaucratic tyranny works better for their ideas than they could ever hope to do themselves. They noticed that wherever in the Empire a remnant of contentment was found, there an official immediately interfered, and still interferes, in order to destroy it. They observed that hunger, tyranny, the repression of all independent activity, the uninterrupted introduction of new measures, by the boundless formalism and appalling senselessness in the administration of the country, have stirred up even the deep-rooted, long-suffering indolence of the peasant, and that simultane-

ously from Tiflis to Helsingfors the uttermost corners are being searched for contented people, in order to make them discontented, by repression of their nationality, their faith, customs, justice and administration. Finally they may have noticed the ever-increasing divisions in the ruling classes, side by side with the growing importance of the industrial working-class. Thus they have begun to resort once more to the desperate means which have little to do with intelligence but which betray a widespread feeling.

In spite of the poverty of the nobility, of the clergy, of the officials, the young people of these classes are thronging the schools and universities in ever-increasing numbers. Thousands have had to be turned back on account of the overflow in these establishments. The Higher Grade schools are full of scholars and students, who, though leading the lives of beggars, are unable to pay their college fees even, and are only saved from exclusion by rich gifts from private benefactors. A strong contingent of these poor scholars is supplied by the clergy, by the so-called "popes'" sons. Since the clergy as a separate class has ceased to exist, since the sons of popes and deacons are no longer obliged to enter the Church, they turn to worldly careers and penetrate into Government offices. They fill the intermediate school and the clerical seminaries, and crowd in hordes into the Higher Grade schools. They come from these clerical seminaries with a very small amount of education, morally neglected and abjectly poor, but very ambitious and with tough perseverance. They starve through the four universities open to them and from thence push on further into Municipal and Government employment. They form a firm mass of civic element which hitherto has shown the greatest capacity for labour. Even under Alexander II. their presence made itself felt in officialdom, and under Alexander III. they were actually favoured, probably through the influence of Pobedonoszew. Out of their midst there arise to-day ministers and high dignitaries. At the head of these "popes'" sons with their fantastic

names stands the chief procurator of the holy Synod, Pobedonoszew. To them belonged, as is said, the murdered Minister of Public Enlightenment (Education), Bogolepow, and the Financial Minister, Wyschnegradski. The high offices of civil and military administration swarmed with priests' sons. These people have no traditions, no differences of caste; they are far from the Camarilla of the great families of the land; they are an enlivening element which might become dangerous to the ancient country officialism. Even the great influence borne by a zealot's zeal, which Pobedonoszew has exercised for some decades past, shows the neutralising activity of this curious Jesuit of orthodoxy to-day very distinctly.

If this element bears an exterior as unsympathetic as that of the "fist" in the village, it must be confessed that it is invested with power, and that presumably it will have a very important bearing on the future of the country. Sixty-three years ago Custine recognised its revolutionary importance; he said of them, "Ce sont ces hommes incommodes à l'état . . . qui commenceront la prochaine révolution de la Russie." In observing to-day these sons of the Orthodox Church at work, we must admire the perspicacity of this gifted Frenchman. Out of their midst and out of that of the sons of lower officials, of small landed proprietors, tradesmen, artisans, etc., the greater number of revolutionaries, of Nihilists arise, but also many of the industrious, striving, sober, independent workers who are to be found to-day, especially in the department of justice. Some day, perhaps, they will take up the roll which has slipped from the feeble hands of the old landed nobility. For this old landed nobility have not been helped by all the subsidies which they received and receive even now, and as a whole they cannot be helped, because they do not know how to work, and because they are too weak to compete with priests' sons, tradesmen's sons, and particularly with State officialism.

These elements rising from beneath are the ferment which urges onward, and which, vanquished again and

again, hitherto has so far caused a reaction. Amongst them the contradiction between internal want of culture and external claims to civilisation is particularly distinct, although it makes itself felt more or less through all the strata of the people. There lives in a district town a pupil of the clerical seminary who, perhaps, has tried his hand for a year in a technical school, or maybe even in a Higher Grade school, at scientific studies, who has then taken part in disturbances, has broken furniture and windows, and has been finally expelled. He returns to the district town where people live, think and feel as in the days of the Holy Vladimir a thousand years ago, and there he becomes a district teacher. His relations, his friends, the tradesmen, the priests, who are still firmly convinced that the familiar spirit walks the house and that it was St Nicolaus who sent the rain the other day, stare at the young student who laughs at the familiar spirit and talks of the electricity of the clouds. Presently they notice that he treads in evil paths ; he has procured a corpse, boiled it, collected the bones, put them together, and the skeleton hangs in his room, a sinful horror. They all combine against the youth and his skeleton ; it is stolen, or seized by force, buried again and again, then discovered, cleaned, put together and hung up in his room—once more ; the young man's mother is in despair—and all this on account of a piece of tomfoolery which is looked upon as a heinous crime. They find out that he believes neither in God nor the devil, that he does not even make the sign of the cross before the saints, nor kisses the priest's hand ; yea, that he has given holy water to his dog to drink. The district doctor, however, takes his part—a shoemaker, sometimes even a deacon, begin to admire him, and propaganda begins, not only against superstition, saints, ignorance, but presently against Church and State as well. This is the "intelligence" which has appeared, nobody knows whence, in the peaceful, benighted village, in the quiet district town, in the shape of this youth in whom the women and old people see the work

of Anti-Christ and many of the younger people a divine revelation. The young man dresses, like his parents and brothers simply in linen and sleeps upon straw ; but he reads Buchner's *Elements and Force*, he raves about Stuart Mill, and endeavours to discover the origin of Force. Neither his parents nor his friends understand even the direction in which his spirit trends, but they admire and honour him, in spite of his brutal conceit, his open contempt for parents, morals, Church, and everything which is sacred to others. It is the realism in education towards which people are turning nowadays, and much more thoroughly than before, which brings great contrasts into the national life. Into the life of the peasant and of the citizen, consisting of faith and of sentiment only, hard, cold doctrines, the laws of physics and of chemistry fit so little that they necessarily act like black magic and are understood as such. According to the status of the popular mind, one might assume that witchcraft and witches' trials are on the increase, as they were with us in the Middle Ages, but external circumstances are turning these social and intellectual contrasts into political ones. Everywhere this phenomenon is met with ; Russia is a howling wilderness as in the days of Rurik ; without any sort of bridge there are carried across a wide chasm from Europe the sparks of highly-developed intellectual activity. They are misunderstood, but seized upon with a glimmer of perception by thirsting minds ; they are fantastically glorified on account of their novelty ; they set fire to this and that and work havoc amongst the unprepared masses. And yet with it all there is the stirring of intellectual life, even though its appearance is perverted and foolish.

Every year there is a repetition of the disturbances in the colleges, which are punished by expulsion, arrest and administrative disappearance. The bureaucratic administration has, according to the statute of 1884, reduced the quality of the teaching, which had never been adequate. The Empire is suffering from a great lack of scientifically-proficient teachers, and the want

of freedom in the colleges repels a number of otherwise available men from the profession. In a country which is going to ruin owing to scantiness and inefficiency of work, not only the day labourers, but even the school children are prevented from working by the increasing number of public holidays. It is the Synod and the Church who are chiefly working in this direction. In October 1901 there appeared in the official organ of the Synod an article in which the Church authorities complained bitterly that Church feasts, such as, for example (in the year 1896), the commemoration day of the relics of Saint Feodossi, Archbishop of Tschernigow, had not been observed in most of the lay educational establishments, and that the scholars were kept at their tasks although the day had been proclaimed in the churches. In addition to these there are the numerous dynastic Government holidays, and finally the interruptions caused by the students' riots, which create a state of things incomprehensible to our European ideas. The statistics of the Reformed Church schools in St Petersburg count for the school year, from September 1900 to July 1901, 174 school days; thus there were observed, according to regulations and not in any way voluntarily, 181 holidays in all intermediate and Higher Grade schools. If, further, the utter lack of any kind of pedagogical training, of anything more than outward formalism, according to our ideas, is taken into account, we in the West need not for any appreciable period fear the competition of Russia in science generally or in any special department of learning.

There is storm and stress on all sides in this Empire to-day, but more particularly amongst the younger generation. Every year most of the colleges are closed for some time on account of riots. The methods as well as the subjects of instruction in the intermediate schools are changed again and again. The chief care of the school authorities is how to keep in hand the pupils by the aid of the police, not how to enlarge and deepen their knowledge. The standard of knowledge for students and pupils is reduced as regards thoroughness,

and at the same time the scholar is overwhelmed with a number of subjects ; superficiality is encouraged. The study of law, of administrative science, of political philosophy, take the place of Latin and Greek, and this is called realism, a practical method ! In reality it is only encouraging shallowness of instruction. The endeavour is not to increase education but polish ; police polish, intellectual polish, both of which produce diplomatic office-hunters. For the more the State takes an active share in everything the more officials are required. Nowadays the very slight training of candidates for these posts is increasingly difficult to obtain on account of the continual disorders. At a time when State industries, education, justice, trade—in short, all departments of national life—are to be developed, when the Empire is to be raised to a state of civilised independence, then the heart, the organ which is to train the required men, suddenly fails. If all endeavours to obtain flourishing industries, efficient medical men, teachers and officials are not to be fruitless then above all the schools must be in a flourishing condition and work on quietly and steadily. If the Government were to meet the storm and stress of the rising generation after the manner of Nicholas I. or of Alexander III.—with more thorough repression than is employed now—it would fail because it would thus assume the position of a field-marshal without officers, because to-day there are required not only more but differently-trained minds for the development of the country. The position of the Government in this bewitched circle is most difficult.

Although almost all public institutions in modern Russia have begun to totter, the crisis with regard to education is the most threatening. Not because a revolution must necessarily follow the breaking of windows, but because this crisis tends to stop the over-heated steam-engine of the State. And this at a time when from beneath the masses, thirsting for education, for organised labour, for public activity, are surging upwards with volcanic strength. In the proportion in

which the State creates ever-new posts the masses require to fill them. The old society, the old officialism, are saturated by new elements. Everything depends upon this—with how much training, with how much education these elements enter upon life. And they come from the colleges, where they have acquired little knowledge but have seen much disorder. It is not only in the Western Provinces, especially in the Baltic Provinces, that the standard of education of all classes has been lowered; in the whole of the Empire the education of the upper classes is retrogressing and has to give way to shallow semi-education. Even apart from the optional education of the highest aristocracy of the olden times, which to-day has well-nigh vanished, where could the striving Russian, since the reform of the Higher Grade schools and universities under Alexander III., acquire the profound learning so essential for the profession of teacher? More even than formerly he has to seek it abroad. The remnant of teachers found in the country is frittered away in official positions, in technical schools, etc.; the Higher Grade schools, the intermediate schools, with their police-like, lifeless organisation, are not able to train the material of men whom Monsieur Witte requires for his purposes of civilisation. Intellectual training and learning are deteriorating systematically, although in a strictly national sense, and yet the endeavour is to scale the ladder of civilisation three steps at a time. Irreconcilable contradictions!

Science has no home in Russia, at least, not upon national Russian soil, and serious people hardly mention Russian science as it exists in the imagination of national enthusiasts. Science and art have entered Russia from the West and South-west, only very much later than they entered Germany from the West and South. Even to-day all science in Russia subsists upon German, French and English labour, and Russian scientific literature consists of translations or compilations from foreign works. Original scientific works of universal value hardly exist at all, and if from national

vanity books of Russian authors are introduced in educational establishments, the pupils are thereby only retarded in their scientific education. Historical Primers, such as that by Ilowiaski, and similar works can only lead to inferior knowledge as compared to that in Western countries. The fact is that Nationalism forms everywhere, in the State, in the Church, in schools, in industries, one of the strongest checks to progress in civilisation.

The Russians are even to-day no more than pupils, wishing to play the part of teachers. In the domain of learning they have accomplished but little that could be of general importance. There are very few *savants* of Russian origin who in speculative or applied science have won a position recognised in the European world. The chemist Mendelejew has rendered a service to the entire world by his complement of the lacking elements in the system of Fraunhofer's spectral analysis; I do not know whether he is of Russian origin.<sup>1</sup> If, in addition, Tschebytschew, Lobatschefsky, Pirogow, Botkin, Solowjew, Bilbassow are named, there is an end of the scientific authorities of Russian origin known in Europe; and many a highly-educated European is scarcely familiar with even one of these. For some time past, however, great activity has been apparent in various scientific departments, the number of young professors is fairly considerable, and their writings are numerous enough to point to a day not far distant when Russia will no longer be entirely dependent upon foreign learning.

In the Fine Arts, also, Russia is but poorly represented. In walking through a Russian art exhibition a strong foreign admixture is easily discernible amongst the names of the artists. Half the names which, even a few years ago, were to be seen in the Russian sections of our exhibitions belong to artists of non-Russian origin. Just as in science, from the days of the Tartar Karamsin onwards, a number of foreigners were con-

<sup>1</sup> The former Professor Mendelejew is to-day director of the Royal Mint.

cealed under Russian names, so this is even more the case in the Fine Arts. The Armenian Aiwasowski, the Prussian Brûlow, the Jew Antokolsk, are well-sounding names, and are looked upon in Europe as Russian, which, however, they are not. To one Russian, such as Vereschagin, there are dozens of artists of non-Russian origin.

Very different, however, is the case of Russian poetry and prose literature. There exist but few good Russian dramas : Gogol's *Inspector*, Gribojedow's *Understanding Brings Suffering* ; the dramas of Ostrowski, the trilogy of Tolstoi are good plays, but after all not of the highest order. But the Russians have excellent lyrical and epic poetry. With Lermontow and Pushkin this kind of poetry has risen to the same level as that of Western nations. The popular song is a natural outcome of the character and spirit of the Russian people. The Russian reaches his artistic height as a story-teller in novels, novelettes, in descriptions of life, and in character sketches. He has a fine sense of form, he is a keen critic and observer ; in addition to this there is the wonderful wealth of the language which, as a popular tongue, is more flexible, more expressive of thought than any other living tongue I know of. It would be possible to translate a scientific work such as the pandects of Justinian, or Kant or Helmholtz into the Russian language without much loss, but in translating Gogol, Turgenieff, Terpigorew, only a part, frequently not even one half, of what these works really contain is reproduced. The Russian language is not the tongue of higher intellectual scientific life ; it is the tongue of the people, and as such peerless. The writers know how to use in a masterly fashion the peculiarities, the flexibility, the wealth of forms, of words, of turns, and the delicate shadings of the language. Those who are endowed by nature with a real understanding for languages and forms of speech will enjoy with rapture the astounding imagery of the language and of the poets. However, he must know people and language better than is

possible after a few months' study or a hurried journey of exploration.

The height of genius seems to have been denied to the Russians hitherto, but they are rich in talent. The Russian actor is as natural, as simple, as at home on the stage as the German is artificial, strained, laboured. The Russian tells a novel so simply, so free from the German desire for effect, and yet in a manner so true, so vivid, that the probability of what he tells is irresistible. Moreover, he relates the simplest events with such psychological finesse that one is moved as by a novel. In the domain of psychological novels I know of none which could be placed on a par with Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. This Raskolnikow, this more than man, created by times and morals and reproduced theoretically by the diseased brain of Nietzsche, is a masterpiece of psychological observation and description. Can there be anything more powerful than the conversation between the criminal and the spying official? These are sketches of character which in delicacy have rarely been equalled or surpassed, perhaps in *Hamlet* alone, and I count this novel amongst all that is most perfect of its kind. Or let us take up the family chronicles of Aksakov, the stories of Turgenieff; what sympathetic simplicity, what truth, and yet what warmth in the description of nature and of the people! Let us take Terpigorew's *Degradation* —I know of no descriptions of contemporary life which can furnish such pure material, such unalloyed gold to the historian. The simplest incidents, the primitive nature of the Russian steppe, how delightfully they are told, how perfectly painted. Of these novelists of popular life more are to be found every year, such as Tschechow, Leskow, Gorki. It is not the language of the *salon*, to which the Russian is as little suited as the German. French *causerie* cannot be rendered by either German or the Russian *causerie*. But it is a national age of wonderful power, which is capable of regaining the national character with great clearness. Great as the power of creation is that of

satire, of mockery, of irony. Soltikow-Schtschedrin, Gogol, are masters in this. Particularly the former satirises the conditions of Government with a lucidity and a humour which one must admire and laugh at over again and again. Officialism has never been scourged more mercilessly than by his Excellency the State Councillor, who had to suffer again and again because he made his superiors objects of derision in town and country. Unfortunately, the Russian Tschinownik, with his activity and surroundings, is so peculiarly Russian that the works of Schtschedrin cannot be translated; they would not be understood outside Russia.

The Russian of the middle classes is, on the whole, not the type by which this people should be judged. The peasant in the village, the servant, the coachman, the tradesman—these easily win everybody's heart. In the circles of the high aristocracy, especially where the former international spirit of education and distinction is still prevalent, the foreigner feels at home more easily than perhaps in any similar circle in other countries. Candour, simplicity, dignity of character are found in various forms in the village as in the palace. Differences of class do not, as in Germany and elsewhere, result in the stiff, cramping forms of intercourse. Little-mindedness with which Germans are reproached in private as well as in political life with some justice, impedes the movement of the Russian but little. He stands less than we do in need of discipline and training in order to acquire easy and good manners; he is self-confident in his manner and not paralysed by the fear of giving himself away, so prevalent in our drawing-rooms the higher one penetrates into Society. The peasant calls everybody, even the Czar, "thou"; the servant frequently addresses his master, instead of "Count," as "Iwan Iwanowitsch"; the housemaid calls her mistress "little mother" (Awdotja Pawlowna). The upper society of St Petersburg and of Moscow is, or was, thirty or fifty years ago at least, a truly distinguished assembly of the

grand style. In the drawing-room Prince Trubezkoi was simply Peter Wassiljewitsch, and gave his hand to the simplest Popow with the words, "Wassili Petro-witsch." This gave, and gives even to-day, an outward equality of class which brings into social intercourse a freedom not prevalent with us. It is true these simple and distinguished manners are restricted to the upper strata of nobility. The case of the smaller landed proprietor is different. He is easy-going, careless, but not small-minded towards others, nor over scrupulous with his own conscience. As regards the great mass of nobility—the paper or diploma nobility—they have obtained merely a decoration, a certificate of service, and do not belong to the real nobility and contribute by their numbers to the democratisation of the states.

As soon as one enters the strata which lies between the peasant and the high aristocracy, as soon as one mixes in the life of the business—and especially of the official—class one has a different impression. Candour is replaced by cunning, simplicity by eye-service. As soon as the Russian dons the uniform—and how many are without a uniform of some kind?—his nature seems to change. He becomes internally and externally unclean ; he loses his independent bearing toward his superiors, his open-mindedness towards his inferiors ; his conscience becomes elastic, his astuteness sharpened, but he does not gain in wisdom. The striking lack of practical common-sense, which I mentioned with regard to the nobility, can be traced amongst the officials up to the highest rung of the ladder. Integrity is unable to resist temptation. Very useful as long as he is guided or led, the Russian is worth nothing as a leader and administrator. Apart from practical common-sense he lacks the sense of proportion. Above all he is wanting in the inherited sense of justice. He knows of no justice which has its root in persons or things, he only knows of laws, and as these are made by the Czar, all justice for him emanates from the Czar, as is always characteristic of despotism. The Russian understands and feels *not* the sacredness of justice itself, but only

the sacredness of the will of the Czar. To him it is no infringement of justice if the ruler breaks a word to-day which he or his predecessors have given ; he does not understand why a right should be defended without regard to material advantage. Just as incomprehensible is to him the sacredness of historical growth ; he is absolutely wanting in historical sense. What is of yesterday's growth is uprooted to-day. He lacks understanding for the past, and therefore also all interest in it. The piety with which we cling to old ordinances and works, on account of which we prefer to inhabit an uncomfortable castle of the fourteenth century rather than put a new house in its place, on account of which we would rather be governed by a pig-tailed magistrate than by an unprejudiced official, for this sort of sentiment he has no understanding, and this want of historical sense makes it even to-day difficult for him to comprehend, to realise how a man, a class, a province may live and be governed otherwise than by the will of the Government and according to written law. Unwritten laws, ancient customs, rights lie beyond the sense of right of the Russian. There exists in Russia Proper no history except that of the Government and of the State. The town of Orel, the province of Kharkov, Naugard the Great, Kiev, Vladimir, Pleskow, even Moscow possess no local history. What does the Russian, even an educated Russian, unless he happens to be a professor, know of the history of these highly-important towns ? Russian local history may be found in Small Russia, which has preserved until to-day its separatism, and has produced its own poets and historians. The history of Great Russia is played in the Kremlin of Moscow and in the palaces of St Petersburg, and what the Russian historians have to relate beyond this is little and interests but a very few. The Government has always endeavoured to wipe out any chance traces of local or provincial history. Thus the Russian takes no interest in his town or province ; for this reason he has no local patriotism and no real feeling for provincial independ-

ence. This he is not able to obtain, except in the struggle with the Central Government in opposition to the State. Without local patriotism, without provincial consciousness, that is to say, without separatism, he will never obtain liberty, but will remain bound fast in despotism or anarchy.

These are characteristics and defects which, whether originally national or acquired, check the civilising and, more especially, the political development. Almost everything appears in this people so helpless, so passive, without any weight and withal so fantastic and unreasonable, that one cannot but doubt whether they will ever of their own accord be able to shake off the fetters of their natural disposition and of historical exhaustion. The course which things are taking to-day in no way tends towards strengthening the people's power. The only ray of light in the picture is supplied by literature, the outlines of which I have sketched. Of a people who have shown themselves so creative and so original in this one domain it may be assumed that this is not the only blossom which it is their mission to bear.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE EUROPEAN FRONTIER PROVINCES

THE Western Frontier Provinces were acquired by Russia at different periods, some by the right of conquest, some by international treaties. All of them were incorporated into the State without being completely absorbed in its internal organisation. Small Russia possessed privileges just like Poland and the Baltic Provinces, according to treaty, and Finland received a separate constitution. This individual position was to be a pledge of their development on the basis of their own history, and this individual development again was to enable them to remain in closer contact with European culture and thus to preserve a channel for this culture to flow undisturbed into Russia. To some extent this intention was pursued, but it was soon abandoned. Small Russia lost its privileges, the Poles their constitution, their army, finally, every separate political right. The Poles had revolted several times, and they were crushed on this account. It was said that the security of Russia required the subjugation of the Poles and the Russification of Lithuania. It has also been said that the security of Russia required the extinction of German life in the Baltic Provinces. Although there is no foundation for this assertion the shadow of a proof could nevertheless be adduced by pointing to the new Germany with her desires for conquest. To everyone willing to see, it is clear that for the sake of the German element in the Baltic Provinces, though it were represented by the entire

population, Germany would never annex these countries even if she were offered them, because their geographical position precludes this, so long, at anyrate, as Germany and Russia remain the States they are at the present time. But that this fear was not the real, but only the pretended, motive which led to the breaking of agreements and of privileges, is proved by the continuance of the system of national extinction in Finland. If, in the Baltic Provinces, revolutionary risings were not the cause, the least of motives, *i.e.*, the fear of foreign conquest, was altogether absent in Finland. No one can possibly apprehend seriously that Finland is ripe for secession in favour of Sweden, even if Russia were unable to cope with a Swedish invasion. The Finns were as contented with their lot as the Baltic Germans before their privileged position was destroyed. It was their privileges which had enabled these by Nature scantily-endowed countries to do the Russian Government and people many a good turn, and to simultaneously create at home a state of order, justice, welfare, of progress in civilisation, which was only obtainable through an autonomous Government, protected by privileges, a condition of things which they were in no way desirous of questioning by any change, even by that of constitution. No one has ever doubted the loyalty of the Finns or Baltic Germans towards the Government. The cause which led to the national campaign of Russification was, as I pointed out in the first chapter, the desire of the Russian official to increase the domain of his power and his pasture land; further, the bureaucratic need for uniformity, and finally a feeling of national annoyance at the fact that nationalities conquered by Russia should be in a different and more propitious environment than the conquering race in Russia Proper. Instead of striving to improve their own condition they attempted to mar the condition of things in the more highly-civilised provinces; instead of demanding for themselves, for Orel, or Moscow, or Saratov, special rights suited to their special requirements, they

demanded the abrogation of privileges by which the conquered provinces had been enabled to develop their powers more freely than the provinces of Russia Proper. To this was added the awakened conceit which rejoiced at being able to give with impunity a surreptitious kick to European culture and institutions. And further, the love of imitation which pointed to Austria and to Germany, without taking into account the differences in their respective grades of civilisation ; finally, also, there was the increased desire, aroused by the despotic pressure in the Russian provinces, to seek activity in the struggle with foreign nationalities and to exert abroad a political influence which it was impossible to exert at home. What sense could there be in deeply wounding the feelings of the Finns simply that their 5000 soldiers might not be left outside the Russian army ?—an army of millions ; and yet the Finnish corps, consisting of but 5000 men, must needs be dissolved ! Of what use is it at the present moment to attack, after the manner carried out in the Baltic Provinces, the privileged position of their language, schools, Press, that in the place of voluntary services, of an excellent administration and of reproachless order, injustice, disorder, compulsion, contempt of public opinion and feelings, and, in the end, police tyranny, suspicion and bitterness of feeling become the rule of the day in this peaceful country ? Is it not a piece of boyish malice to wound the Poles by erecting a monument in Vilna to the memory of Muravieff, who by them is called the “hangman” ? Is it not the hat of Gessler ? Is it not mocking provocation which are personified in this monument and in the many other things set up in a similar manner, by which brute force is presented to the Poles, Baltic Germans and Finns ? The truth is that the Russian bottle politician (“quass-patriot” as he was formerly called in St Petersburg) could not bear the thought of the Finns having any special rights, of their leading a separate and happy existence. It was envy and irony which Custine once found to be the principal quality of the Russian. The

same Russian who, at home in Kaluga or Orel, finds everything bad, who mocks at everything, from the governor down to the peasant, cannot bear to see in Finland or in Livonia order, cleanliness, honesty, contentment! The same Russian who bewails the misery of the Russian peasant, the decay of the Russian nobility, calls in the help of the police and of the Government in order to help the day-labourer in the Baltic Provinces, who puts by every year in the savings bank fifty or more roubles, in order to save, so they affirm, from the tyranny of the nobleman the farmer whose stables are splendid buildings compared to the dwelling-houses of the Russian peasant, to break down the position of this tyrannical nobility to whom the Baltic Provinces owe the most perfect agrarian legislation which any country in the world boasts of, and the further development of which has only been checked by the violent destruction of its historic edifice and of its vested privileges. The same Russian who wishes to reign over the whole of Asia, and who becomes intoxicated with the mere thought of the might of this gigantic Empire, envies and fears at the same time the power of a few hundred thousand Swedes and Germans. The same Russian who sighs under the yoke of the Tachinownik, tears down with a brutal hand the self-government of provinces which have never abused their privileges, consisting merely in their being allowed to promote their own interests, their own development and welfare, according to their own ideas.

All resistance which the destructive hand meets with in the Frontier Provinces is stamped as the crime of separatism. But, after all, is separatism a crime? Is it wrong to wish to live differently from the great mass of the population of an Empire of 126 million inhabitants because one is of different origin, faith and history? Is it reprehensible to desire to differ from the inhabitants of the Centre whose cry of misery rises up to heaven? Can a sensible man in the Frontier Provinces wish to assimilate in his province conditions

as they exist in the Russian Centre? Can a sensible man in the Frontier Provinces of the West be anything else than a separatist, or, if this word displeases, an autonomist? Can he wish to become the plaything of officialism, to renounce all activity, to receive all the blows which a Minister may think fit to administer to riotous districts in the *gouvernement* of Kharkov or to a corrupt municipality in St Petersburg? After all, this kind of bureaucracy is sufficiently well known. Not in Russia alone, but in Prussia also, and elsewhere, there are tales to tell of this soulless formalism, which easily settles in the shining buttons, whether on the coat or on the cap. It was said a few years ago that a man in St Petersburg had poisoned himself with Hoffman drops by drinking them instead of brandy; whatever may have been the cause, it is a fact that an order was sent to all the chemists in the Empire not to sell these drops without a doctor's prescription. The poor people, who used this medicine a great deal had, instead of paying a few pence, to call in the doctor in order to obtain a prescription, until after the lapse of many months the order was cancelled. As with these drops so it is with more important things. The province of Watka has, after much trouble, succeeded in founding good schools on the strength of its provincial privileges. Another *gouvernement* has done nothing for its schools; the Central Government does not therefore compel this particular *gouvernement* to do something for its schools—oh, no! it interferes by means of legislation in the powers of all the “provinces.” Watka is punished for the fault of Vologda, and the consequence is that the schools in Watka also fall into decay. In Tver desires for constitutional government are manifest; the consequence is that all the provinces of the Empire fall under the suspicion of such tendencies and are treated accordingly. Just as the communal ownership of land and collective guarantorship act upon the Russian peasants, so compulsory equality and assimilation act upon provinces and *gouvernements*. There are greater or lesser distinctions of nature, race,

culture, between the different provinces, but this is not the business of the Government. Just as the peasant in the village is not allowed to be more industrious, just as he cannot and may not, cultivate his field better than his neighbour, so the province of Podolia or Curland may not show a different or superior development to that of Orel or of Perm. And if they do so, in spite of the pressure of the State, they have to suffer for it just like the peasant who has to pay the tax of his lazy neighbour. This uniformity of law and administration incites to laziness and indifference. Nowhere can individual or provincial strength develop, because uniformity is required by the centralising power. Yet nowhere the desire for the development of independence is greater and more universal than in so great and so varied an empire as Russia. Nowhere either is autonomy more justified. What is it, after all, that the Finlander and Livonian desire alike with the inhabitants of Kiev, Tambov, Moscow, Watka but the chance of improving the condition of things in his own circle, in his own province, according to his own will and understanding? What is it he longs for unless it be freedom of labour, of thought, of faith, of customs, of life, of speech, of activity? Nothing weighs more heavily upon all the inhabitants of this Empire alike than the consciousness of their inability to further individual, communal or provincial needs on account of the necessity of conforming to the so-called universal interests of the Empire, *i.e.*, to uniformity. For these so-called interests of the Empire are in reality only bureaucratic interests. How is the opinion of the individual, of the town, of the province to be of any account if there exists but one opinion—that of the ministerial *ressort*? The most urgent reforms are impossible because they are not applicable to, or prepared for, throughout the whole of the Empire. In the Baltic Provinces the various "states," particularly the nobility, had a hand in legislation thirty years ago, in so far as it related to these provinces alone, or, in common with them, to the rest of the Empire. The diets made their proposals,

and the Government examined, altered, confirmed. For thirty years wishes, projects, drafts of bills for the most important reforms, as, for example, the right of inheritance for the peasant, that of water companies, etc., have been lying in the archives, and why? Because such questions are not being considered for the whole Empire, or because the respective subject is to be regulated by law simultaneously for the whole Empire, perhaps after a lapse of a few decades. One and the same right of inheritance for the Baltic peasant with his flourishing farm, his scientific farming, his strong sense of right and of inheritance, and for the farmless communal Russian slave, who has no sense of right and of inheritance! How should the Baltic German not be an autonomist? All the civilising work of centuries with regard to justice, to school life, to economic life, to custom and language, all is broken down and placed into the hands of an official class to whom these conditions are entirely foreign and necessarily incomprehensible, and who can only obstruct, check and mar them. How then should the Baltic Germans and the Finlanders not be autonomists? Out of every one of them, out of the Small Russians, the Armenians, not to mention Poles and Lithuanians, they seek to drive the national soul. Finally many Russians themselves are separatists.

Has the thoughtful, judicious Russian in Tambov, or in any other part of Russia, any wish other than that of ridding himself of the yoke of the centralising Government? What else is the desire of the Provincial Assemblies unless it be to obtain the right of improving by the very mistakes which they have made upon these mistakes, to pass through the political school which they require, in order to learn the difficult art of self-government in course of time. It is well known in Tambov and Smolensk that uniformity, the great brutal universality of the Empire, is crushing, and that there is hope only in the possibility of each province shaping provincial conditions. Salvation can only lie in the separation from the general Government chaos,

in short, salvation lies in autonomy. Autonomy, this is the aim towards which all parts of the Empire must strive; in this lies the future of Russia. Privileges, separate rights are but the outward tokens of the existing variety with regard to nature, nationality, history; in solitary cases these may be unjustifiable, but in principle they are perfectly justified as a protection against the democratic or despotically bureaucratic uniformity. If Russia earnestly desires progress of civilisation she must desire above all self-government for her provinces, autonomy, local interest.

The Cossacks are probably to-day the only inhabitants who—apart from socialistic artificial agitations—are satisfied with their lot, and why?

The Cossacks are not subject to the ordinary government, but have a privileged position. The whole Cossack district is distinct from the general administration. At the head of it stands the Heir-Apparent as chief hetman (captain), who is represented by the "hetman *locum tenens*" chosen by the Emperor. He rules the district in his military capacity—every Cossack has to do military service, and the officers are chosen just like the civil officials. There are no differences of class; theirs is a democratic peasant community, a free self-government, the freest in Russia to-day, and what are its results? I take as witness Terpigorew, the faithful portrayer of Russian life, who relates a few incidents of a journey he made by ship up the River Don, and who gives us an account of the Cossacks of the Don, who form the largest group of the Cossack army. He is astonished at the rich, prosperous country of the Steppe, with its clean white villages, hidden in the verdure of gardens, with their merry, comfortable inhabitants; and yet a travelling companion and inhabitant of this district complains how the country has changed for the worse during the last decades—the same complaint that you hear everywhere about the interference of officials.

For you, says Terpigorew, it is a sin to murmur. If

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there are people who have cause to murmur you certainly have none.

Yes, we are fairly comfortable. Do you know what is our salvation? That we have neither Jews nor officials—above all, no officials; the Jews do not matter much, we know how to deal with them. But the officials, oh!

Are they not good? you do not love them here?

I have had a look at them—yonder in your districts—and, do you know, it is after all only a misunderstanding. You hear and read sometimes that Peter the Great is accused on their account, because it is he who introduced all these chancelleries. True—but why did he introduce them? To keep accounts, to send out his orders—most probably for this purpose. Were they ever in his days allowed to draw up documents concerning the restoration of order? This right they have arrogated to themselves by force much later. In his days they were modest, quiet; they were thieves, it is true, but, after all, that is not worth mentioning. The point is, they did not check the development of active life—there you have the whole matter in a nut-shell. They know nothing about this active life and yet are desirous of regulating it.

I did not answer; I simply listened.

Well, we have none, I mean Tschinowniks, or, at least, hardly any. The law officials have only just been introduced, and of others there are none; besides, there is another circumstance. If you knew our district better you would notice that with us the relation between town and village is quite different than with you. What are your towns? Dens of thieves in which the merchants and all sorts of evil-doers have taken root, who from thence suck the villages dry. This is not the case with us. Our Stanitzes are rich and strong. I do not know how it will be later when “the better order” has set in, but for the present our towns cannot crush the villages. With you, yonder, it is said that culture has been planted and nurtured in the towns—I do not know how to express myself—but

with us this is not the case. We have no need of this culture of yours which puts all the power into the hands of officials. Go on enjoying it. Joking apart, he added, take care! You will end by envying us—"the cultureless people."

And not Terpigorew alone, but who in Russia does not envy these once so contented Cossacks of the Don, who for the last twenty years, since real "order" has begun to be introduced into their country, have been only half content. Their ancestors were the fugitives from Moscovitic order, and their descendants fear nothing so much as the St Petersburg order of to-day. They are the strongest separatists, as strong as the Baltic Germans and Finanders, and if their language did not chance to be Russian, the State official, with his Russifying mania, would have been upon them long ago. It is true there is a certain fear of attacking at all seriously these seventeen brave regiments of the Don; they have not yet forgotten their Pugatchew, Stenka Rasin, Bogdan, Chmelnizki, and have even in more recent days shown their teeth whenever their privileges were tampered with. How curious! For decades past the entire officialdom of Russia has cried out whenever it set eyes upon a privilege anywhere in the Empire; and the best, richest and only contented Russians in the Empire are the Cossacks, the very people who possess the greatest privileges. Separatism, autonomy are like a red rag to the bull, and yet they are the cause of the welfare of the Cossacks, and all the world knows this and approves. Those to whom this contentment is a thorn in the flesh are now beginning to agitate against the Cossacks.

One of the greatest mistakes ever made has been the breaking up of the separate position of the Baltic Provinces. Is there any national civilisation in existence? No, all civilisation is derived from the West, where centuries have been at work, and whence Peter the Great wished to obtain it. People are now beginning to understand this in Russia after having lost considerable time with futile phantasies upon original

Slavonic civilisation. If Russia wishes to progress, her Western doors must be opened wide in order to facilitate the influx of European culture. Foreign millions of gold do perchance bring increased civilisation but no real culture. For this purpose men, opinions, knowledge, doctrines—in short, an abundant fertilisation of the Russian plains is required. The Baltic Provinces and Finland were the best mediums for this intellectual fertilising process, just as Poland was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Even to-day it is in Finland that the Russian is best able to learn in what self-government consists, what are its moral and judicial roots, how it must be handled in order to bear fruit. In the Baltic Provinces the Russian could see for himself thirty years ago how an aristocratic administration, under the protection and control of the monarch, is able to solve questions by slow and steady progress, which no State officials in the world could solve more satisfactorily. There he was able to acquire, through the medium of an excellent school education, the advantages of active German intellectual life, which it is absolutely essential for him to share in order to further civilisation on Russian soil. He found schools and a university, which to a great extent had been nurtured by the Russian rulers for the purpose of establishing a lively communication between Russia and Western intellectual life. What benefit have not thousands of Russians derived directly or indirectly from those schools and that university? The beneficent activity of Baltic schools and of a Baltic university has been felt through the medium of Germans and Russians in the furthest corners of the Empire.

Now all this is destroyed. The university and schools have become entirely Russian. The standard of education in the Baltic Provinces is being lowered year after year, the Russian university, Jurjew, is scientifically of no importance. The gymnasia have pedagogically and scientifically deteriorated so much that thirty years ago Baltic parents would not have thought of entrusting their children to such educational establish-

ments. The university, the polytechnics, are swamped by numbers of Russian youths who have been expelled from elsewhere, and who have caused the temporary suspension of lectures by their excesses. None of these establishments any longer offer any scientific training; their task consists in the teaching of the Russian language. What advantage does Russia derive from this change? None. On the contrary, great loss, since the pleasurable feeling of having destroyed foreign work and culture, and of having substituted placards in the Russian language, cannot be counted as a gain.

Russia cannot do without the science of the Western States. Since the destruction of Dorpat youthful minds desirous of quenching their thirst in Western springs are obliged to cross the frontier into foreign schools and universities. In Germany alone there are more than 700 Russian students in the different universities. At the Zurich university there were, in 1901, 98 Russians, at the Polytechnic, 30, and probably there are as many studying at Geneva, Berne, Lausanne and Basle. A portion of these might, if Dorpat had remained what it was even thirty years ago, have found there what they now seek abroad. In Berlin special courses are held for Russian doctors, and much frequented. Formerly Dorpat supplied the whole of Russia with efficient medical men; its medical college had a high scientific reputation. How many men, efficient in all the departments of learning, have not been driven out and now adorn German schools? There are dozens of them, whereas in Russia a great part of the chairs remain vacant for lack of teachers. This is the consequence of the destruction of German civilisation in the Baltic Provinces. For my part I can perceive no advantage to Russia in it.

If such provinces as the Baltic Provinces, with German culture, German language, jurisdiction, customs and administration—and Finland, with Swedish culture and administration, were non-existent they would have to be created to-day in the interest of Russia, even at the cost of great sacrifices. The experience which

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the Russian stands most in need of, the foreign influences which he most requires, if he is to judge correctly the condition of things at home in the *gouvernement* of Orel or Tver, these he would find more easily and better even here than at Swiss universities, or in primers of English constitution, or in educational tours to English cattle farms. But Western European culture is driven out of the country in order to be sought afresh abroad. Russian nationalism is to be furthered, and civilising agencies are destroyed which have been evolved by the close contact with the West during 700 years. Nationally Russia has not advanced one step from Helsingfors to Kiev and Tiflis. The Government has flooded the Frontier Provinces of the West with the destructive waves of its nomadic army of officials; the Russian people have had to make great sacrifices of money and of men for this, and have reaped no advantage whatever.

In spite of pernicious bureaucratic and national pressure these Western provinces, situated between the Baltic and the Black Sea, are even to-day the strongest supporters of the economic life of the Empire. One consequence of the poverty in the Centre is, as we have seen, that whatever revenue is drawn thence by taxation is more than returned during the ever-recurring famines in the shape of remission of taxes and of State aid. The Frontier Provinces have not required any State aid; their agriculture advances unchecked by the communal ownership; their working capacity is on the increase, and is becoming more and more productive with the progress of agriculture and the appearance of industries. In Poland a very considerable profit has been derived from the presence of the troops, since the greater part of the army has been stationed there. By the close contact with the West the roots of old culture are once more throwing off young shoots. But these provinces have no easy time, struggling as they are with hostile powers for the very lowest measure of freedom which they require for the development of their economic life. Their choicest powers are exhausted in the defence

against bureaucratic unreason and ignorance, against envy and conceit, and they are deprived of their best implements of civilisation by a blind nationalising zeal.

Miliukow,<sup>1</sup> in his studies upon culture, expresses the view that sooner or later the process of development of the social idea must lead to a change in the fundamental idea of national existence. "The national ideal," so he says, "must make way for a social one, in the sense of laying greater stress upon internal politics, of obtaining a better understanding of the requirements of modern times in this respect, and of adopting a more active attitude." This is advice worth taking to heart from a man who thinks in a scientific manner. Wherever the national propaganda is not simultaneously a civilising propaganda there it is evil, more especially in a State which has to face such stupendous problems in its home politics as Russia. From a national point of view national propaganda means a foreign, not a home, policy.

It is surely self-deception when Russians of moderate views assert that in Finland, Livonia, Poland, the introduction of the official language into official life is all that Russia aims at. The intention is rather to turn Finns, Germans, Poles into thorough Russians as regards language, faith, customs, institutions; in short, everything foreign is to be exterminated, without considering that it is a very different matter whether you are dealing with Tschuwaschs or Swedes. How long-suffering is the unofficial, and frequently even the official Russian with Tartars and Mongols, how patiently does he bear the fact that even to-day 150,000 heathens are settled in the Government of Perm, and yet how unbearable everything foreign seems to him in the Frontier Provinces. What has been obtained, and what can be obtained? Frequently, and with surprising ingenuity, the non-Russian element from the Caucasus to Finland has been roused with the result that to-day the great mass of unofficial

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches of Russian History of Civilisation*, vol. iii. p. 2.

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Russians and non-Russian people are one in this one respect—*i.e.*, the viewing of officialism with enmity. Many a one asks himself where changes are being prepared for most—above or below? Who are the greater revolutionaries? The result of the unification, of the merging into one, of the so-called Russification of the Frontier Provinces, is the union with the Russian Centre Provinces in their aversion towards the State of officials.

This zeal to change Russia into one national State requires sacrifices so great that some day one may expect the conviction to dawn that this struggle must be given up, since it brings to the State, and to the Russian people in particular, no adequate gain. An Empire, the inhabitants of which to the square km. of its European domain number but  $19\frac{1}{2}$ , and in the entire district only 5, cannot, so one might assume, find it easy to make these possessions remunerative as well as nationally secure. An Empire which, within its frontiers, numbers many dozens of different nationalities, should, so it would appear, not think of burdening itself, apart from everything else, with official language teachers for 40 million non-Russians. An Empire, the people of which are on a level with half-civilised nations, ought to think more of the advancement of material and intellectual culture, no matter whence obtainable, than of a national uniform which in itself is inefficient. But the fact must not be lost sight of that Russia is to-day the same that she was 200 years ago—a semi-Asiatic Empire, and, as I observed before, she feels as such. Peter I. wished to Europeanise this Empire by force, and since then it has become receptive to European culture in many ways. At the same time, however, it has extended further and further towards Asia, and the 100,000 square km. of the yearly increase are upon Asiatic soil. This condition of things explains the continual oscillations between the desire for civilising European influence and that of being an independent civilised Asiatic Power. Again and again there is a clashing of

the contrasts once incorporated in Peter I. and in his son Alexei, and chiefly because Russia has never succeeded in growing one with Europe, because she continues to fritter away what she has absorbed of civilising capacity, in foreign wars, in conquests, in nationalistic struggles at home, and because she is ever absorbing new Asiatic elements, even before old Russian elements have attained an independent power of civilisation, she exhausts herself internally in this struggle for external greatness and internal strength ; she weakens herself in the struggle against foreign influence which she stands in need of for her national development. How often in the Russian Press something like a cry of despair is heard for originality, for cultural independence. They cannot bear the thought of being a powerful world Power and yet a people of slight importance to civilisation. So they strike at foreign culture wherever it makes its appearance as such in the land, not because it is culture but because it is foreign ; and thus they often end by despising culture itself, since it is inseparable from the foreigner. This is the very path by which China arrived at isolation and petrefaction. It means no civilisation at all rather than any that is not Russian. It is the wizard's wand which paralyses Russia, and might become disastrous should she remain under its sway. The shaping hands of history and of geography are visible enough in the Russian State.

The abnormality of the relations between existing powers and the work necessary to accomplish it has become so great that, as I pointed out with regard to the Finances, this gigantic Empire runs the risk of falling into decay through what might be termed civilising anaemia. For the casual observer, however, external power hides internal weakness.

## CHAPTER XIII

### COLONIES AND WORLD-POWER

IN Russia the opinion is often expressed that she is great enough in herself to be able to dispense with any Colonies. Yet although not possessing any Colonies beyond the seas, she is nevertheless the greatest colonial Power in the world, by reason of her Asiatic possessions, which, though sparsely populated, have, for the Mother-country, a colonial importance somewhat similar to that of India for England. In Northern Siberia civilisation has yet to accomplish everything, in Central Asia almost everything; endless plains await cultivation, great mineral wealth exploitation. Since the railway line has brought these countries into close touch with the Mother-country, the charm which they exercise upon the adventurous spirit of the private individual, as well as on that of the Government, is on the increase. For about the last fifty years the Government has endeavoured, with much success, to create order in the newly-acquired Central Asiatic regions. Where pillaging hordes of nomads or tyrannical Khans were supreme formerly, the merchant to-day travels by Russian mail coach, by railway or by steamer in complete security. Peace and order are there established to a degree to which they can scarcely have prevailed in the days of Tamburlaine the Great. Trade is on the increase; Russian immigration, and, likewise, a real colonisation, has taken root, even though the officials and the soldiers preponderate everywhere. Wherever the Russian finds a native population in a low state of civilisation he knows how to settle down with it with-

out driving it out or crushing it ; he is hailed by the natives as the bringer of order, as a civilising power, and does not awaken the embittered feeling of dependence so long as the Government does not conjure up national or religious strife. A healthy and useful colonisation is on foot here.

In the exploitation of mineral oil in Trans-Caucasia, twenty-eight companies, paying dividends of as much as 60 per cent., were employed in the year 1900. In the rich province of Fergana enormous deposits of oil have been discovered lately beneath the fertile soil. Cotton cultivation has made such progress that it produced in the year 1900, 7,638,200 poods of cotton ; the bad harvest of 1901 yielding, roughly speaking,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million poods. Even now Russia can count upon supplying half her demand for cotton from Fergana and from the other Colonies of Central Asia. The gold mines of Siberia yield about 40 million roubles of gold. Apart from the gold, however, the exploitation of most of the sources of income in Asiatic Russia are in the hands of foreigners. Even the cartloads of butter sent from Siberia every week to the ports of the Baltic, in order to go beyond the sea, are produced by Danish dairy farmers. Nevertheless, a part of the profit remains in the country, and the Treasury reaps a certain advantage from the production of these Colonies, in so far as it does not burden itself with expenditure on railways and other enterprises, the interest due on which swallows up the profits. After the deduction of a percentage for the producers, the 40 millions of gold find their way into the coffers of the State ; on the mineral oil alone the Budget for 1901 estimated a tax of 26 million roubles, and of 27 million roubles for 1902. The export of wheat and butter from Siberia benefits the balance of trade. The Government is zealously anxious to increase the production of her Colonies, and voices are heard even now which make this endeavour a reproach of favouring the Frontier Provinces at the expense of Old Russia. " You may be certain," exclaimed the familiar Golowin, recently, " you

may be certain that the more distant, the more sparsely-populated, the more neglected by nature a district is, the more will be done in the way of attempting the artificial awaking of its economic life. It is high time to begin to think of Central Russia."<sup>1</sup> And it is true benevolent labour in Asia has its reverse to the medal. Even thirty or forty years ago much pride was felt by Russia in being a European civilised State. To-day the tendency is rather to feel satisfaction in being an Asiatic or semi-Asiatic Power. Or has even this wave rolled past, perchance? In balancing the results which Russia has achieved in Europe and in Asia against one another it must be confessed that this feeling is justified. Futile as the endeavour has been to push Russian nationalism and civilisation towards the West, the advantages which have accrued to her in this respect in the East and in the South are incontestable. The conquest of the Caucasus has opened up a new world to the Russian desire for expansion. With the Russian soldier and the Russian official the merchant has penetrated into Western and Central Asia, and large tracts of land, which through centuries had belonged to pillaging hordes, have been won over to order, to labour and to trade.

The powers which incite a nation to an extensive policy are of varied kinds. They originate either in the desire for rule or in the ambition of great conquerors, and generally become paralysed as soon as this ambition disappears or the conqueror dies. Or they flow from the accumulated expansive power for civilisation in a people and then remain lastingly active. The policy of a Tamburlaine is in direct contrast to the policy of great and successful colonial Powers. Empires which were founded merely by military superiority soon fell into decay; Rome, it is true, did govern the world a long time, not, however, with her generals, but with her civilising power. England's extensive policy began with the protection of her emigrating people, and has followed ever since in the wake of her merchant ships and emigrants, the natural bearers of her civilisation.

<sup>1</sup> In the newspaper *Rossija*.

Bismarck has declared this method to be the normal one in colonial policy. It rests on the assumption that all offensive policy takes for granted a surplus of popular strength, without which a State may perchance make conquests but cannot extend lastingly its circle of activity without detriment to the people. How little England colonises successfully by military force is shown to-day in the Transvaal; but she colonises with incomparable success where, as in Australia, she proceeds without straining the government finances, and without a shot, simply by the unfettered activity of the civilising strength in her people. The enormous material, intellectual and moral powers which she has accumulated in Great Britain by the labour of centuries, it is these which have made Australia, America and India English, and to the profit, not at the expense, of England. Without this enormous latent capital of civilisation England would have been ruined long ago by one-half of her colonial possessions—even if these possessions could have been acquired in the first instance by the power of government merely. The means she uses for this purpose consist partly in money, partly in men. When we consider that Russia has built her railways with foreign money, and has paid, and is still paying, for her conquests, and for her influence in Turkey, in Persia, in China, with loans and money which would have far better served internal welfare, the contrast with the English method of procedure becomes more marked. England has always acquired and developed her Colonies with the *interest* upon her capital of money as well as of men. The welfare of the administrative, social and commercial conditions in the United Kingdom has advanced steadily, hand-in-hand with colonial expansion. For every newly-acquired territory private means and men were always at disposal without the State having to lay burdens upon the people which would have weakened them. Every English merchant and farmer brings into the new Colony the independence necessary for organisation and for the cultivation on foreign soil, without any help from the State, or, at least, merely

under the latter's protection. This cannot be replaced by bureaucratic power nor be learnt by official schooling. For this reason the old English form of self-government is the best school for the English colonists. The State can only raise the outer walls of a new edifice; the internal progress, the active growth, must proceed from within if they are to become useful to the people, else the Government pursues an exclusive policy at the cost of, and at the expense of, her people.

This has been the case in the many conquests which Russia has made since the days of Peter I. Russia's best colonists have been the Cossacks, that is to say, a people of runaway peasants freed from the power of the State. The South of Russia has become Russian mainly through these fugitives working without any State aid—yea, even against the State—and since then no Russian acquisition has been made which could be said to be of equal advantage to the Russian people. Behind the Cossacks and the freedom there always have followed, since the days of Peter, State officials and servility. Russia has mostly colonised with officials and Cossacks, because she lacked an industrial middle class for this purpose. However, inexpensively as the Cossack settled in the South and gained the whole of Siberia for Russia, many more recent Colonies have been a great expense to the State.

Meanwhile Russia continues on this dangerous road towards an expansive world-policy. By the expenditure of 100 million roubles the Siberian Railway was built; with a further 50 million roubles, the Manchurian line, the Baikal line and the Ports. As long as Siberia was left to herself she cost the Russian people nothing. The line is not finished yet, but even now new millions are being expended on the Pacific Ocean for ports, fortifications, barracks, settlements, stores, etc.; even now the mobilisation of an army of 200,000 men according to official report, has been found necessary there. The opening up of Eastern Siberia, the building of ports and of railways, has, as a natural

consequence, the necessity for increasing the Navy. The policy on the Pacific Ocean swallows every year in interest and actual expenditure so many millions that even the most flourishing trade could not make up for them—60 million roubles per annum would not cover the costs. And what return do Vladivostock, Port Arthur and the railways make? For the present they still require subsidies. Who pays for these? The Russian tax-payer. Nobody expects any interest upon this expenditure within any appreciable period. They bring to the State an increase in power, and they open up great tracts of land for the immigration of men and labour. But have the Russian people a desire for increase of power or of arable land—of fertile soil? The power of the State is greater than is perchance salutary for the people, and between the Volga and Dnieper the home soil lies desert for want of careful cultivation. To one class of people, it is true, this expenditure will bring sure and quick advantage—to the officials who find yonder new soil for further increase.

If this Russian method of colonising—for it is colonising although no ocean separates the Colonies from the Mother-country—is compared to the German method of treating the Colonies, her Budget experts in the Reichstag must frequently appear somewhat provincial. Poor Russia spends 300 million marks, which she has to borrow, on the construction of railways in her Colonies; the Reichstag cannot make up its mind to grant 300 million marks for a railway in East Africa. But Monsieur Witte, as well as the Reichstag might learn from each other how to keep within bounds—the one as regards expenditure, the other as regards niggardliness.

When Russia penetrated across the Caucasus into Central Asia it was always affirmed that she had been driven to it by pillaging tribes which threatened the frontiers and had to be subjugated. But Asia is not populated by pillaging tribes alone, and yet in 1860 the district of the Amoor was taken, and she is engaged to-day in absorbing Manchuria in some form or other,

a country of more than 900,000 square km., greater than Germany and Austria put together, and inhabited by 7 or 8 million men of the Mongolian race. Who will be the better yonder for Russian Government? There is some talk even now of churches, schools, even of seminaries for teachers to be erected in Eastern Asia; the necessity of an Eastern Asiatic university is broached even; an Orthodox Manchurian Bishopric has been established and a monastery has been built for Manchus and Chinese. A power like Russia has duties to fulfil, duties of civilisation in her Siberian domain. By all means, only she has greater responsibilities even towards the Mother-country. The money of the Russian tax-payer would be more profitably applied at home than in Eastern Asia, and the tax-payer can have very little interest in keeping up in Eastern Asia or in Western Russia thousands of officials, priests, teachers and professors. All these people no doubt serve the Government, and the increase of its power, but not the Russian people crying out for bread and civilisation.

In Eastern Siberia, in the region of the Baikal, Russia even now works not for herself but for others. The Chinaman is labourer, merchant, banker; all business is transacted through him or through his equally astute neighbour, the Korean, and this will remain so, because nobody will be able to outdo these people. The Chinaman, with his economic superiority, will soon be the aggressive party, and Russia will find it hard to oppose him. After having transplanted the frontier upon Chinese territory she will soon wish for a Russian Great Wall against China. The Japanese are appearing in numbers as colonists, and have taken in hand the oversea communication. The Americans and the Germans have, to a great extent, undertaken the importation, not only of manufactures but of food stuffs, and the Eastern Chinese (Russian) Merchant Fleet works at a great yearly loss. On the railway Polish engineers are at work. What remains to the Russian so far as he is neither soldier nor official? The land

itself for settling. But even here they have so far done badly. German, Baltic and Esthonian farmers flourish in Siberia. The Russian brings with him neither the energy nor the industry which are essential for such colonisation, he merely lets out the great tracts of land. Russia has built these lines on the one hand for Germans, Englishmen, Frenchmen; for Americans, Chinese and Japanese on the other; it is they who will use them for their exports and for transit. Russia herself will pay the freight for the transit, commerce will pay for the government of the country and supply the protective army and navy. For the rest raw produce will find its way into the West from thence and spoil the prices of the Russian corn. That Russia should not establish herself as the exporter of manufactures to Japan, China, Korea, of this half Europe and America will take good care—to them the cheaper road by sea is open.

On the top of all this there has come the Anglo-Japanese alliance of the 30th January 1902. Since the year 1895 it seemed more than likely that this would be the consequence of the interference of Russia in the China-Japanese War. It even appeared safe to assume that this alliance would be concluded sooner, and that the two naval powers would oppose the claims of Russia in Eastern Asia before the Siberian Railway could facilitate Russian military operations. However, the position of Russia, even after the completion of the Siberian Railway, would be a very difficult one against the considerable power of the Japanese, which would be supported by England. The declaration of the Russian Government of the 3rd (16th) March 1902 cannot conceal the fact that her position in Eastern Asia has become precarious, and it is to be supposed that she has secured the help of France by a private treaty in the case of an attack by Japan. But what price has she had to pay for this? Should it be a mutual guarantee of the *status quo* in Eastern Asia, then Russia may find herself obliged, considering the rest in Southern China, to go on expending her

strength piecemeal upon these entangled affairs, whilst after all the stakes of the two contracting parties in Eastern Asia are not equally great. If, however, Russian influence in China and Korea should be lost by a conflict with the naval Powers, the position in Manchuria might easily become untenable. What future would then open up to the Eastern Siberian enterprise? What security, not only for the dividend but for the capital which has been sunk there? A hundred million roubles are hanging in the air and a storm may blow them away. This is a colonial policy which far exceeds the strength of the Russian people—a policy which may become more fatal for Russia than was the South African War for England.

Through the gates opening into the world of the yellow race the leading Powers are crowding eagerly to-day, hurrying, hustling one another, throwing suspicious glances, pressing forward into a newly-opened treasure house; no one thinks of what perchance might be met with in there. No people stand so opposed to our European civilisation as the Chinese. Wherever the European has hitherto come into closer social contact with the Chinaman, there the contrast has shown itself; the hard materialism of the Chinaman has always repulsed the European. Without religion, without morals, without a sense of truth, of honesty, of cleanliness, such a people the English in Australia, even the liberal-minded Americans in California, could not bear, because their influence upon social conditions was pernicious; and the Chinese alone of all foreigners trading in those countries was restricted by special laws. If the English, the Armenians, the Jews worship the golden calf, the Chinese do so more fervently still, for apart from it they hold nothing sacred and are thus morally more depraved than any other people. This people, this Empire are to be opened to the European at all cost, and again in honour of the golden calf, the one common idol. As regards working capacity the Chinaman is far superior to the European, also as a merchant or a business man.

Who, then, will in the long run reap economic advantage? If a reform in China should really take place, if European industries and technique and trade should make their home there, if the pigtail and the return of the dead, and the contempt for the foreigner, and the misgovernment of the Mandarins should cease, who would reap the benefit? Shall we let ourselves be poisoned by the immorality of the Chinaman, be overrun by his cheap manufactures? Shall we let his excellent and innumerable workmen, who are content with 2d. a day, take the bread from our mouths?

I cannot here develop these views further, but it seems to me that Europe would do better to leave the Chinese to themselves and not to venture from the coast into the interior in order to open up China, in order to challenge those millions to competition in the economic domain, and to incite them to an influx into the countries of Europe. If the latter should ever be the case, a great danger to our civilisation would have been conjured up. The disaster must come some day, but we should not wish for it nor hasten its advent.

Of all States competing in China, Russia alone has a land frontier with this State. Her proximity gives her a long start in the influence over China. If Russia keeps Manchuria in some form or other, and if her intercourse with China revives, a great Chinese immigration into Russia could only be checked by an armed force. Economically the Chinese is so superior to the Russian that he alone would reap the advantage of this intercourse. But morally he will have the most pernicious influence upon the Russian. The morals of the Russian administration in Eastern Asia are even now not particularly high. A strong Chinese influence, such as a lively intercourse between the two nations would necessarily produce, would make of Eastern Asia a sort of training college for all kinds of vice for Russian people. Instead of taking Manchuria, Russia would do better to

1 the Manchurian Railway to China, else the day will e when this same Russia will wish for a wall against

China stronger than the one which the Chinese once erected against the Tartars.

The interests of the Russian people influence the so-called public opinion but little. The latter is not even satisfied with the present extension of the frontiers of the Empire. It calls for Mongolia just now, at least for a part of it—the West; it is not satisfied with a protectorate in Persia, it urgently demands an outlet on the Persian Gulf and a port on its shore; it declares Asia Minor and the countries on the Euphrates to be spheres of Russian interest, and the construction of a railway to Bagdad and to the Indian Ocean by the Germans and French to be a violation of Russian interests. All Asia is not too large for this land hunger. Perhaps the idea is not exactly that of dividing Asia into Russian *gouvernements*, but to have the hegemony in Asia, and to get the trade of Asia into Russia's own hands. What, then, are these Russian interests? How great is the number of the Russians in the whole of Asia? What is the amount of Russian manufactures yearly going into Asia? In the year 1898 Russia exported manufactures of the aggregate value of 21·2 million roubles, and, as I mentioned before, within the period from 1877 to 1899 on an average 25·6 million roubles' worth. Into Asia alone there can consequently only have gone of iron wares, cotton goods, etc., to the value of a few millions. As to the Russian trade interests in Southern Persia, and on the Persian Gulf, has Russia at the present time the very least interest in the Turkish port of Koweit? Not a single Russian lives there, and there is no trade of any kind with that coast. Yet in the autumn of 1901 two men-of-war were sent thither, ostensibly in order to protect Russian interests against England and Germany, and a Consulate is to be established there. What real interests has Russia in Abyssinia? Yet not long ago these interests were exaggerated into a national affair of the first importance. This is real boundless world policy. It is true even Peter I. pursued it, but it has not gained in utility since; it only serves to train and maintain officials and competitors, and is for this reason

supported and encouraged by officials and by the Press.

What, then, is the value of the power of a Government? Surely it must be calculated by the use it is to its people. External power gives, above all, protection against external enemies; beyond this it gives influence with foreign Powers, and this influence in its turn brings advantages to the individual subject who pursues his interests abroad, and therefore advantage to the people as a whole. If there is nobody whom this power can benefit abroad, if external power and influence upon men and conditions emanating from it bring advantages to no subject of the State which exercises this power, then this power is useless; and if great sacrifices in money and labour have to be made in order to obtain and maintain such power, it is dangerous, and entails loss to the people at home. Whoever maintains a Consul at a place abroad where no subject of the respective State lives and no trade relations exist, nor are likely to exist in the future, that person is squandering his country's means. The Consul must be paid for by the advantages which he secures for the subjects of his State, else he is a burden to the people at home. The tendency to-day is to consider the influence and prestige of a Government at any distant spot or country as something precious in itself, and not to realise that this prestige is mostly dependent upon very considerable expenditure made on its behalf. Great pride is felt in being able to hoist the flag in Koweit or some such place, or in establishing a Consulate at Buschiri in opposition to the English, without any other necessity than that of flattering national vanity. Even in the days of Peter the Great, Russia paid for a number of representatives abroad who brought no return but were only so many shop signs with the inscription, "There is a State called Russia." Now Russia wishes to reach the Persian Gulf at all costs, and many politicians consider this desire perfectly legitimate. What advantage could a Russian port there promise for the future as long as there is no railway from the

Caspian Sea or from Merv to the Gulf? Apparently none, for there is neither Russian people nor manufactures. Will Russia build this railway? Will she again expend hundreds of borrowed millions upon a vague future whilst her people are starving at home? And if the line were built does she imagine that the English will be driven out by Russian manufactures? Russia has very few export manufactures—only raw material, and she pretends to be in the greatest need of markets for her manufactures; she dreams of spheres of interest where no interests are at stake. But this great extravagant policy interests many malcontents at home far more than does the well-known starvation in the country, the provinces without roads, without schools, without work, without life. To play the part of a great Power towards England is far more satisfactory than to see to the misery at home. As Russia fears English trade competition in Persia, in Afghanistan, she would like to prevent the English from establishing themselves on the Persian Gulf. Asia, however, does not exist for the sole purpose of waiting until in some dim future Russia should be ready to open her up and to supply her commercial needs, and the Russian tax-payer was not created to suffer hunger in order that coming generations might some day find no English or German trade competition in Western Asia.

If Russia's real spheres of interest in Asia are mapped out soberly, they comprise the Central Asiatic countries, the greater part of which are in Russian hands already, and besides these Northern Afghanistan and Northern Persia, with Teheran and Ispahan. From these regions Russia does derive some advantage, and might derive even more in the future. For this reason the just begun railway, Orenburg-Tashkend, may economically be a wise enterprise. Russia obtains from thence raw materials—above all, the cotton so necessary to her—and she has created for herself a favourable market for industrial wares, for textiles, for sugar and iron. This region is very large and capable of development. Nobody comes in her way there; and if Russia should

Pontus. Since Roumania has placed herself in Russia's way to Constantinople on the Danube, she wishes to be able to reach the Bosphorus unhampered by the southern land route. On this road Germany does not meet her with a Bagdad Railway, and has, as far as we know, raised no objection in Constantinople to Russia reserving to herself the right of improving that route by a line of rails which would enable her to approach the residence of the Sultan in a dangerously quicker way, in case of need. Russia will have to accustom herself to the idea that Turkey is no longer exclusively a Russian sphere of interest.

This excessive world-policy has, apart from the weakening of the national strength, another disadvantage. It contributes to the excessive expansion of bureaucratic power. On behalf of this world-policy the omnipotence of officialism must be maintained, for without it the former would be impossible—an omnipotence which, amongst the people, bears the sacred title of Czaric autocracy, but which in truth means the supremacy of the civil and clerical Tschinownicism. For the sake of the policy of external splendour and of conquests internal centralisation must be carried on more vigorously, and it draws away all the strength of the people from the provinces, in order to accumulate it in the palm of the ministerial Government. *Vice versa* the Central Government is driven to a policy of external splendour and show by the necessity of keeping the strength of the people in hand, of which it would no longer be sure if it had to register failures abroad. This army of officials has become so large that it lacks internal cohesion, which disappears more and more the larger it becomes. A considerable number of the officials are always ready to feel and place themselves by their inward criticism in opposition to the central power and as one with the people, and they will express this by external activity as soon as they are wounded in their pride by external defeats, or are restricted in their desire for new offices and sources of income. Every new addition of territory in Asia means fresh

pasturage for officialism, just as, on the other hand, every expansion of self-government in the country restricts the territory for the Government officials. But there are limits to even this. If the strength of the people is no longer sufficient to bear the world-policy of the Government, if it does not meet with success, if the consciousness spreads that the sacrifices which the people are making are too great for the gain purchased by them, bureaucratic omnipotence begins to totter. Russian bureaucracy is at the present time guided by men who have the power and the resolution to cling to the centralising system, in spite of the precarious position into which all classes of the people have gradually drifted, and in spite of the discontent at the omnipotence of the State which has spread through large sections of the population. In these circles the sacrifices in taxes and men, in freedom and independence, are considered too great compared with the actual results of the labours of bureaucracy. They complain that Russia, the Russian Russia, is becoming poorer year by year, whilst at the same time the omnipotence of the Government officials is on the increase. More loudly and more frequently does one hear expressions in public which point to an approaching struggle of local strength with the central power of officialism. For this struggle the Central Government itself seems to be preparing, in so far as it is not fully prepared already by centralising to the utmost the resources of finances and of administration.

Thus the scarce civilising powers are being squandered in both directions—in Asia by boundless territorial expansion and equally boundless expansion of fantastic interests; in the West by isolation against the influx of foreign civilising forces, and by the struggle with the existing foreign forces for civilisation in the country itself.

There are many people who deny this Russian people any future as far as development and independence are concerned. Gobineau expressed this opinion from his ethnological point of view several decades ago, and at

the present time it gains ground amongst those who do not restrict themselves to the admiration of external greatness and glory, but who inquire into the capacity of this people. And indeed one may well lose faith in them if one sees how ceaselessly they are clamouring for independence and freedom, and how incapable they are of making use of them as soon as they obtain them anywhere or in any measure or degree. One cannot wonder that a Minister himself despairs of the possibility of this people themselves ever ameliorating their conditions of life by their own initiative, by industry, by order and by a sense of duty, and that he finally resorts to the old system—the official knout. But if you arrive at this point of view you ought at the same time to realise that you are not dealing with a civilised people but with a primitive nation, hence national claims and forms of government should be avoided which are only applicable to civilised States. It ought to be understood clearly that the Russian, such as he is to-day, can never be the guiding element in an Empire in which he is inferior as regards civilising power, not only to Western Europe but to Finns and Tartars. The difficulty, however, is that this primitive people of 86 millions cannot bear to play second fiddle and that they endeavour to hide their own defects by external glamour. Every Minister has to reckon with this national sentiment, and thus the Russian is not raised by the foreign elements existing in the country; on the contrary, these are brought to the level of Russian lifelessness. Such a condition is certainly almost hopeless. Everywhere in Europe the national idea has grown into a disease; in Russia its leading principle is stagnation, the standstill of all popular life, and the Minister who would renounce this principle in favour of civilisation and of the people's rights would, in order to be successful, have to be a statesman of the very first order. Mediocrity will never get beyond bureaucracy so long as it clings to uniform centralisation.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE INSTITUTION OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

THE editor of a Russian journal called the *Dawn*, published, at the beginning of 1901, in Stuttgart, a most remarkable paper. It was written in Russian and called *Autocracy and the Provincial Assembly*, and contained a memorial by the Russian Financial Minister, Witte, on the institution of the Provincial Assembly in Russia. This pamphlet is a sort of thesis upon the memorial of the former Home Minister, Goremykin, which had been called into being by a memorial of Monsieur Witte's, and in it Goremykin defends his plan of introducing the Provincial Assembly into the so-called Western domains of Russia.

If it were a question of proving Goremykin's plan to have been futile, nothing more need be said on the subject. Witte would be in the right and Goremykin be entirely wrong. But here is much more than a dispute about the institution of provincial assemblies in the West. Here we have a conflict of principles of the highest importance—a contest between a first-rate Minister, and not his colleague only, but one-half, or even three-quarters of the inhabitants of the Russian Empire. The point at issue is: Shall the Government of Russia remain one of absolute bureaucracy, or is it to be led into constitutional pathways?

We may attach but slight importance to the opinion of Goremykin; all the more as his opinion is not shown forth very clearly in this pamphlet. But the opinion of so powerful a man as Witte must always be of the greatest interest to us, and at the end of the paper he expresses

it in plain words. He looks upon modern constitutions as the great lie of our times, and upon their application to Russia as the sure means for the dissolution of this Empire. He may be right as regards this. But he himself declares that the Government of the Empire, such as it is now, cannot continue, since two antagonistic principles are opposing each other in the administration ; the bureaucracy of the State and the organs of provincial self-government, the one as representing monarchical autocracy, the other the popular power which necessarily must lead to a constitution, to a share of the people in the administration. Even in this Monsieur Witte may be right. But how is the conflict to be ended ? No extension of the activity of the provinces, so says Monsieur Witte, is to be allowed. It is to be restricted within well-defined limits, which are to be exceeded under no pretext whatsoever. At the same time (as soon as is possible) a just and adequate re-organisation of the Government administration is to take place, based upon the principle that whosoever is master in the land is to be master also in administration.

Is this the programme according to which Monsieur Witte will commence the great reform and abolish the development of forty years of provincial activity—a reform of administration—nothing more ? It seems to be Columbus's egg over again, with this difference, that if one considers that for the last 200 years all Russian Czars and Czarinas, Ministers and Chancellors, have endeavoured to invent such a “precise and suitable organisation,” but that hitherto none has been found to be precise and suitable, one may become somewhat sceptical as regards the feasibility of the task which Monsieur Witte imposes upon himself and other Ministers. If this task were so easy, if it were feasible, what Witte desires, *i.e.*, an omnipotent rule of officialism administered from the Centre with a “correctly organised participation of the social elements in the Government institutions”—then, since the reforms of Catherine II., this ideal would probably have been

attained to before now—then Monsieur Witte would not have had to be at such pains to show that provincial assemblies are in principle irreconcilable to the absolute power of the Czar. What, then, is this “properly-organised participation of the social elements” in the administration of public affairs which is to replace the so improperly-organised participation of the provinces?

“The development of social powers,” so says Monsieur Witte, “its full and many-sided development, is not only not opposed to the principles of absolute monarchy, but on the contrary gives to the latter life and strength. Whilst participating in the development of social independence, whilst, so to speak, observing the social pulse, the Government will not fall into dependence on society, but remain a judicious power, always conscious of its aims and of the means for their attainment, always knowing whither it tends or leads.” Truly, we have often hitherto had occasion to admire Monsieur Witte as a man of practical and energetic activity, and we are greatly astonished to see him appear here as a full-fledged idealist. The enlightened absolutism of the Minister burdens itself, so it seems to us, with a task which no State of the eighteenth century has mastered completely, even with the best material of officials at its disposal. According to Monsieur Witte this task is to be accomplished by Russia of the twentieth century. What is it that impelled the Government of Alexander II. to resort to provincial self-government if it was not the experience that State officialism is incapable of feeling the pulse of the people and of fulfilling simultaneously the other ideals of the Minister? Whence this eternal wail, wafted across Russia through centuries past, that she is lacking in efficient official material? Has all this been suddenly changed? Do we not hear every day of the old failures, of this self-same bureaucracy which has been patched up since the days of Peter I. without any thoroughly efficient results, and as the supplement and controller of which in a moderate degree the Provincial Assembly of 1864 was instituted? Whence has the

Minister so suddenly obtained sufficient confidence in this bureaucracy to make possible the ideal administration of an Empire like Russia, even if correctly and suitably organised?

It is, however, not our business to pose as the champions of Russian self-government. We are interested above all in the question which road Russian governmental life is likely to take. Here we have a pamphlet in which to-day, or at anyrate three years ago, when he wrote it, the most powerful man in Russia openly advocates a return to a system of purely bureaucratic, self-centralising government. In reading carefully between the lines, it appears to us, however, that the Minister has arrived at his conviction only through a hard internal struggle, not by any means because he was so certain of the attainment of his bureaucratic ideals, but because he saw no other alternative of escaping from the much-feared constitution. Probably only a minority of the politically active men are, however, fearful of a future representation of all classes; much smaller even is most likely the number of those who are ready with the Minister to paralyse self-government once and for all, and to re-establish the omnipotence of Tschinownicism. It seems doubtful, therefore, whether Monsieur Witte will have the last say in the matter; it is interesting to enter more minutely into his explanations.

In his first memorial he had explained that for an autocratic Government, with its unavoidable bureaucratic centralisation, provincial self-government was an unsuitable means of administration, or, at anyrate, that it must inevitably lead to the representation of all classes and to the participation of these in legislation and in the highest branches of administration. Both these ideas he seeks to justify in this second memorial, by adopting, however, most readily the proof of the incompatibility of self-government with an autocratic form of administration. For however great the number of scientific authorities upon which the Minister bases his memorandum, may be, this assumption, that

self-government has, even in theory, been almost played out, appears scientifically unsound. The assumption that self-government and a State bureaucracy are essentially opposed to each other rests on a far sounder basis, and has certainly been hardly ever disputed. This contract of principles Monsieur Witte considers a sufficient proof for the inadvisability of a simultaneous activity of both kinds of officials. He does not even think of inquiring whether the very existence of such a contrast, and the consequent struggle, might not be useful, as such resistance of the highest Government authority is, in his opinion, an evil which must be combated as a matter of principle. He cites against self-government that it is easier to establish or dismiss a governor than the head of a town elected by ballot, that it is easier to alter an ordinance of some Government office or other than the decision of a rural council, etc. The stiff-necked bureaucrat is thus characterised sufficiently. But all such considerations are as nothing compared to the threatening danger of seeing emerge from local self-government a universal representative government after the European pattern. In order to emphasise this danger the Minister quotes a long string of scientific authorities as witnesses.

The saying goes that it is the wont of Russian Ministers and dignitaries to appear in suchlike memorials equipped with the whole armour of European science. At anyrate Monsieur Witte has quoted, in an appendix to this memorial, a collection of learned opinions, as proof for the close connection between self-government and representative government. It is true he laments the incompleteness of this collection; but the short abridgment which comprises a great part of the text of his memorial is in itself sufficient to create amazement at the knowledge of which a Russian Minister disposes. The entire administrative literature of Europe, the constitutions and provincial legislation and district administration of Germany, France, England, yea, of Roumania and Japan, the history of the French Revolution, together with a

synopsis of the reforms of Stein-Hardenberg downwards to the events of 1848 and to the debate in the Reichstag of 1872—all the weapons of intellect are arrayed there in order to prove the close connection between self-government and constitutionalism. Certainly all these testimonies seem to have been absolutely necessary in order to refute a Minister who, on his part, is standing entirely upon a scientific basis, and who has proved by Russian history that throughout the whole course of Russian history local self-government has been doomed beforehand by the peculiar social structure, and even by the geographical position, of the country, and that, with the exception of a short period of transition in the middle of the thirteenth century, bureaucratic administration had never served as a basis to the Russian State edifice. However surprising the ideas of the Home Minister may be, the more convincing is the opinion of the Minister of Finances as regards the gradual tendency of local self-government towards universal self-government, if such a proof were required; only that the great advantage which in Monsieur Witte's opinion the Russian development possesses over the European, the advantage of having avoided the struggle of the classes amongst themselves and against the monarch, would scarcely meet with universal recognition. Russia herself will not escape this struggle, and Monsieur Witte himself is perchance preparing an unnecessarily great conflagration by his inconsiderate realisation of his State ideal, of an autocratic bureaucracy and the consequent centralisation of the Government.

This veneration for centralisation is strengthened once more by science, especially by A. le Beaulieu, a foreigner, although the opposite point of view is taken by men who know Russia so thoroughly as Herzen, the two Aksakows, the historian Kostomarow. It is, in fact, easy to quote dazzling arguments for the necessity of administrative centralisation in Russia, and Leroy-Beaulieu has done this to its fullest extent.<sup>1</sup> But we have before us the example of how Baron Haxthausen,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Empire des Tsars.*

fifty years ago, dazzled the whole world with his discovery of the social ideal in the Russian commune administration, and thus kept back and entangled hopelessly to this very day the normal development of Russian peasant conditions. The "Mir," the Russian peasant commune, is, even to-day, a national shibboleth which many believe in, and, if Monsieur Witte were to succeed, bureaucratic centralisation might equally well become a national shibboleth. There is no lack of dazzling arguments for those who have in view not so much the welfare of the Russian people as the splendour of the Russian State. Although this dogma, if recognised, will not have the longevity of that other dogma of Haxthausen's invention, it will spell far greater disaster for the whole social life in Russia, not only for that of the peasant. If Monsieur Witte had studied, thoroughly and in person, those numerous scientific sources from which he quotes as from an overwhelming stream, he must have begun to feel doubts as regards his dogma and the authority of Leroy. But as readily as Monsieur Witte adopts the view that the scientific armour of his opponent, Goremykin, has been pieced together by other hands than his own, so we may also assume that Monsieur Witte has never seen, or at least never studied, the large library by which he swears. He, too, has had his scientific armour made by "Joiners," neither has he studied Gneist, or Holtzendorff, or even Friedenthal, or Barante, or Dicey, or Brougham, or Marx, or Stuart Mill, or the Japanese Jayenaga, etc., in order to write his memorial, and his "Joiners" (as Monsieur Witte's expression is literally) have only used the great literature of Europe *in usum ministri*, without telling him more about it than he wished to hear. All he wished to hear was that Russia cannot be governed except by a centralised government—Tschinownicism—and that therefore self-government in Russia would be an absurdity.

Although this scientific duel between the two Ministers interests us as being representative of the kind of warfare waged between leading Russian statesmen, our

attention will be claimed far more by those chapters in the memorial, in which a short history is given of the struggles which from 1864 to 1900 have been fought out between the provinces and the State Government. In these the impartiality with which the Minister describes these struggles, with which he, little heeding the errors of the provinces, chiefly points to the tyrannical proceedings of the Government, must be recognised. We will follow his dissertations briefly.

The principle of the representation of all classes, so says the Minister, made its appearance in our institutions all of a sudden, without being preceded by a long historical process which might have smoothed, step by step, the differences between class and class. In Russia of the beginning of the "sixties" a reaction set in in the views of the Government and of Society. The old order of things had broken down ; the political edifice of the Empire, which had rested so long upon the representative organisation of the privileged classes and upon the hierarchy of local society, saw itself face to face with the principle of universal representation ; the system of local administration had to be radically changed. The general tendency was for a political change, and it found its focus in the "*Bell*" of Herzen. Liberal ideas and constitutionalism were then so strong that even Katkoff spoke in favour of an assembly of an all-Russian Provincial Council for the purpose of organising public opinion. Amongst the men who prepared the drafts of the Bill for provincial organisation there were many who were one with their leader, Milutin, in the view that the introduction of a constitution was premature though desirable in principle. Milutin wished to begin the work of erection from the bottom, with local elective bodies, by whom the country was to be gradually trained towards self-government, and these elective bodies were to be the beginnings of a powerful representative Government. It is noteworthy how impartially and warmly Witte defends here, against the attacks of Goremykin, the "remarkable statesmen of the sixties," who, " in their days, accomplished things greater than

their successors ever produced, who strove, according to their inmost conviction, for the renovation of our administrative and social edifice with a loyal devotion to their ruler and not in opposition to his own endeavours." Does Monsieur Witte count himself amongst these?

In the manifesto of the 31st March 1863 announcing the institution of Provincial Assemblies, Alexander II. described local self-government as the foundation-stone of the entire social structure. He further declared: "In maintaining this institution we reserve to ourselves the right, after they shall have been tested in practice, to proceed to their further development, according to the requirements of time and place." In a despatch of the 14th of April of the same year, addressed to the Russian Ambassador in London, the Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, said: "The system adopted by his august Majesty contains the seed which time and experience are to ripen. It is destined to lead to administrative autonomy, on the basis of provincial and municipal councils, which in England have been the starting-point and the foundations of her greatness and prosperity." In a similar manner the Czar spoke in August to Milutin, *i.e.*, that he was not adverse to a representative Government, but did not consider Russia ripe for a Constitution.

Although the commission which drew up the law of 1864 respecting Provincial Assemblies was presided over by a man of so constitutional a mind as Milutin, and was inspired by the spirit and the letter of constitutional life, there very soon arose, side by side with the liberal spirit, suspicion and fear of the reformer's zeal, especially amongst the nobility, who were shaken to their very depths by the abolition of serfdom, and very soon in Government circles too. The new Minister of the Interior, Walujew, took over, in place of Milutin, the presidency over the commission, and there appeared a tendency of steering between the two principles and of seeking a compromise. The independence of the Provincial Assemblies was no longer the one aim for

which they laboured, but rather the endeavour to satisfy the strained expectations of the mass of Liberals without, however, endangering the authority of the State. Provincial law received its undefined character, which was a result of the endeavour to satisfy the disciples as well as the opponents of reform; the former were comforted with the future, the latter soothed by making the powers of the provinces very elastic. Above all, they gave up all idea of creating as the foundation of their edifice a representative commune. On the whole, the legislative power of the State remained untouched, but its administrative power was considerably restricted in favour of the new Provincial Assemblies as representative organs of the respective local population. There was a cleavage in the power of Government which necessarily led to antagonism. From the very first years of the existence of the Provincial Assemblies this antagonism made itself felt. Mutual suspicion and mistrust, open or secret opposition, passive resistance and even open conflict, these are the traits and the single episodes in the history of their relationship. With the Government was the power, and the outbreaks of the provinces thus bore the mark of impotence. Outwardly this relationship appeared as follows:—On the one hand, the governmental principle suppresses more and more the provincial principle; on the other hand, the province strives more and more to leave its narrow frame, to become a real power, to create executive bodies and to obtain participation in the central Government. This struggle is no coincidence, no psychological aberration, but a conflict of principles.

The independence of the provinces has been restricted by the Ground Law of 1864. Many of their decisions could be annulled by the Governor or by the Minister of the Interior, if they were in opposition with the "laws of the general advantage of the State." The elastic conception of the advantage of the State rendered possible a steady progressive subjugation of the provinces to the power and control of the Governor. By a discussion in the Senate of the 16th December 1866,

the governors were granted the right to reject any person elected by the provinces, by reason of a lack of "fair-mindedness." In the following year the disciplinary power of the president of the Provincial Assemblies (Marshal of Nobility) was greatly increased. Thus these assemblies became entirely subject to the power of the President and of the Governor. In the year 1879 the governors obtained the right to remove provincial officials on account of a lack of fair-mindedness. By dint of various ordinances the medical men and chemists of the province were made into dependants of State medicinal boards and governors, the school councillors of school curators, the teachers of inspectors, etc., from which it is evident that the Government was endeavouring to restrict provincial independence, to turn it into a mere semblance and to gradually reduce the provinces themselves from bodies dependent only on the control of the State to the level of bureaucratic boards obedient to the will of the Governor.

Simultaneously and step by step there went on the restriction of the provincial powers. By a law of the 21st of November 1866 the right of the provinces to tax commercial and industrial institutions was restricted. The most serious restriction, however, which the provinces had to suffer was in the domain of national education. At first the provinces had been granted a very liberal share of the care of education by the law of 1864, so that in fact the province obtained almost entire control of the national schools. When Count Dimitri Tolstoi had become Minister of Popular Enlightenment there were issued a string of measures, the purport of which was to eliminate the province from the actual management of National Education, and to restrict its powers merely to the economic interests. In the year 1869 Government inspectors were created who were empowered in 1871 to remove national school teachers on account of a lack of sound sentiments, and to annul decisions of the school councils; in 1873 an Imperial rescript openly expressed anxiety lest the

national schools should become instrumental in the moral decay of the people, and the Marshals of Nobility were warned to be especially watchful. In the year 1874 they were made presidents of the school councils. The power of the school councils was reduced to a mere form, and the entire administration of the school was placed in the hands of Government directors. The provinces made violent protests against this interference. The provincial organisation of Kharkov made complaint in 1880 that the national school teachers had fallen into dependence to innumerable authorities, from the school councillors, the Marshals of Nobility, the inspectors and directors, down to the district and country policemen, yea, indirectly to the village priest and parish clerk, each of whom insisted upon his rights and claims upon the school. They urged that the teacher lost his position, was unable to fulfil his duties conscientiously, and as a consequence a universal exodus of national school teachers began. Similar protests came from other provinces and school councils. Thus, the Novgorod School Council wrote:—"If, in spite of all this, teachers are yet to be found devoted enough to fulfil their duties under such conditions, there is much cause for astonishment and for rejoicing at the results obtained by them."

In other departments dependent upon self-government, such as medical institutions, road construction, etc., the provinces competed with the Government bodies, which were still existing in the *gouvernements*. "In this competing activity the Government systematically favoured the latter, which it looked upon as its own, and to the province was left a subordinate and merely servile part. This preference made itself felt even in the most unimportant, unessential questions, such as, for example, the repairing of roads."

"Thus," says Monsieur Witte, further, "independence, the basis of every self-government, and in a similar manner the sphere of influence of the provinces, was restricted systematically by the Government. Evidently it looked upon the province with mistrust. The mis-

trust is particularly noticeable in its attitude towards provincial petitions. With regard to these petitions the Government did not even always act consistently. It very frequently showed excessive mistrust by refusing even such petitions as were justified." Thus, for example, all provincial petitions were refused which requested the exclusion of the tax-owing inhabitants from the list of candidates for provincial representation and fines for voting members of the provincial meetings on account of unjustifiable absence from these meetings. However, especially pronounced was the mistrust of the Government with regard to the petitions of the provinces for the creation of a small administrative body of the lowest order, and for a unification of their activity and for the remission of this or that universal law.

According to the original conception of the law of 1864 the province was to maintain a lasting connection with the respective locality and society. But the law gave no sort of facility for the maintenance of this connection. Not only was the Rural Commune, the first step towards self-government, not created, but the provincial district authorities were not even empowered to execute the resolutions of the Provincial Assembly. The provinces were not able to act independently, partly because this was prohibited by law (for example, with regard to the tithes), partly because the district represents too great a unit, the local differences and peculiarity of which the Central District Government is incapable of following. Without a firm standing and the necessary connection with the locality, without executive bodies of their own, the provinces were not only unable to execute their measures properly, but also unable to secure the regular payment of provincial rates, a reason for some amongst them to be in a precarious financial position at times. The lower police officers were indifferent guardians of the interests of the provinces, and fulfilled their regulations but ill, whereas it ought to have been their duty to see to the execution of provincial measures.

This characteristic lack in their organisation the

provinces endeavoured to remove from the very first day that it became apparent. Towards this one aim each individual province moved, but on a different road. All provincial petitions in this respect, however, were systematically rejected, and it may be assumed that in this the Government was prompted more especially by political considerations, for as regards the fitness of things there cannot be the least shadow of a doubt that without a firm footing and without contact with their sphere of activity the provinces could not work successfully, and either with or without intention had to neglect some of their most important duties. With particular suspicions did the Government view the attempts of the provinces to establish a closer connection between themselves and the rural representatives of self-government. The majority of the population of the *gouvernements* are the villagers; originally, therefore, every endeavour of the various provincial offices was to satisfy the needs of this class of the people. The provincial representatives looked upon this duty of theirs as the most natural and essential; for its fulfilment they were of opinion that the closest acquaintance with the existence and the conditions of life of the peasants in the respective localities was indispensable; else it might happen that needs of secondary importance were satisfied in lieu of more important ones. The Government, however, did not merely consider it impossible to merge the self-government of the peasants<sup>1</sup> into the edifice of the provincial institution, as, for example, by the creation of a representative parish commune, but it even adopted a negative attitude towards the endeavours of the provinces to supply the very needs of the peasants. Thus, for instance, the Minister of the Interior prevented, in the year 1874, the province of Tauria, desirous of taking charge of the welfare of its peasants, from making any local inquiries with regard to their

<sup>1</sup> The Russian village communes—the “Mir”—are the only “States” which have rejoiced for a long time unmolested in self-government.

economic needs and to allotments. Thus the provincial self-government, which was called to see to the local needs and to the prosperity of the population, was in reality deprived of the very right of becoming acquainted with these needs by investigating the people's condition.

Whilst thus resisting the endeavours of the provinces to take root in the country and to enter into closer relationship with the rural self-government, the attitude of the Government towards the unification of the provincial activity, for the purpose of establishing connection between the separate provinces, was characterised by even greater distrust. At the very beginning of their existence the provincial officials possessed the right of printing their reports, minutes and papers on their own responsibility and without censorship. In those days the newspapers vied in zeal with one another to report on the activity of the Provincial Assemblies; public opinion took a lively interest in this activity, and a community of interest began to dawn between the provincial district offices and those of the *gouvernement*. But even on the 13th June 1867 there appeared a resolution of the Cabinet Council, confirmed by His Majesty, which prohibited the printing of the resolutions of reports of meetings, etc., as well as of the debates and speeches of the provincial—town and party—meetings without the sanction (to be obtained in advance) of the local *gouvernement* authority. In spite of this first prohibitive measure, the effect of which, according to Koschelew, was very marked, the provinces continued to struggle with all their might for a co-operation in their respective activities. They arranged for a mutual exchange of reports, and endeavoured to give a wide interpretation to the point of the law with regard to the Provincial Assemblies, by which they were allowed to carry resolutions with regard to their relation, or to arrangements with other assemblies, in matters which concerned the general ordinances of the Government and questions of the judicial limits of the

powers of the meetings. At the same time the provinces began to petition for the granting of a General Assembly for the discussion of questions which concerned several provinces alike, and for the issue of a printed organ of the collective provinces.

One must, it seems to me, recognise that all these endeavours and requests of the provinces tallied with the fundamental idea of the law of 1864, the object of which was to unite the provinces and to train up in them a regular, independent and public opinion. It must be agreed also that the striving for co-operation by the provinces has a well-founded practical reason. The severance of the provinces, and the impossibility of business transactions between them, necessarily had a most baneful effect upon the course of their affairs ; there could be no concord even in those branches of economic life in which such union was particularly necessary, not only in the interest of the single provinces but also in the interest of the Empire. Further, the undisputed fact cannot be denied that neighbouring provinces will and must always have close and inseparable interests with one another. The struggle with epidemics, with noxious animals and insects, cannot be pursued successfully by a single province. The construction of means of communication between neighbouring *gouvernements*, the distribution of the risk of agricultural insurance over a larger district, the raising of pension funds for provincial officials, etc.—all this is impossible, except by an agreement of the several provinces interested in the matter. Finally it is impossible to draw a sharp line between "local economic needs and necessities" and the "general interests of the Empire." All this taken together perfectly justifies the struggle of the provinces for co-operation.

The Government, however, viewed all these attempts in a very different light ; doubtless it saw in the union of the provinces a source of danger. This privilege granted to the provinces by the Ground Law of 1864, to consult with one another, was restricted more and

more, received a more rigid interpretation, and all attempts of the provinces to apply it were frustrated by the Government, even when the greatest caution was practised by the provinces, as, for instance, when a province (Kharkov) sent a petition to the Government to explain the possibility of applying a particular law. Further, a ukase, circulated in the year 1868, restricted the intercourse of the provinces amongst each other and their publicity; all meetings of the several provinces, the foundation of one common organ, all this was nipped in the bud. Finally it was prohibited to mention at all the meetings of the Provincial Assemblies in the papers.

More particularly envious was the demeanour of the Government with regard to all attempts on the part of the provinces to obtain an influence upon the Legislature. The provinces petitioned most frequently for such alterations of the law, which had a general bearing upon all provinces alike or upon the State as a whole. Many of these deserved serious consideration, and in no way opposed the fundamental idea of the law of 1864. All such requests were refused on purely formal grounds. The tendency towards mistrust and towards restriction of the powers of the provinces worked from the Centre outwards, and not *vice versa*, as Goremykin thought; it created in the country the "sad chronicles of the conflicts and contradictions in which the histories of the provinces abound." If the central power was suspicious, mistrust, and the endeavour to subject the province to the guardianship of the Government, was more apparent in the actions of the governors themselves; they often violated rights which by law the provinces enjoyed. The district authorities even went beyond this—they resorted to pressure upon the village communes during the election of voting members for the provinces; to punishments in the case of election of persons who were not in good odour with the administration; they even used compulsion against voters. "There," says Witte, "are very sad pages in the history of the provinces."

Naturally the provinces could not but see in these actions of the central and local authorities a systematic attempt to restrict their activity. At the same time they recognised the needs and insufficiencies in their own organisation, and appealed to the Government in many petitions which contained many bitter truths. In view, however, of the mistrust of the Government, of the restriction on all sides, of the impossibility to bring into execution, to any appreciable extent, the drafts of the Provincial Assemblies, the zeal of many of its best supporters in the cause of the provinces cooled, and in proportion as they withdrew from activity, the elections fell more and more into the hands of a special class of men who had worked their way up and who looked upon the provincial Budget as a profitable source of income. The activity of the provinces showed defects and blemishes so great that even its most zealous adherents could not deny their existence. "Hard pressed," says Witte, "by Government regulations, incomplete in its organisation, the province certainly became a very poor instrument of administration."

Although much was said and written about these things, and even more would have been written but for the interference of the Censors, the true cause of this sad and abnormal condition of things remained in the dark. "Apart from the gutter Press and foreign literature which, from its point of view, gave a pretty good estimate of the position of things, there were only two different opinions prevalent. The Liberal press sought the cause of the limitations to which the provinces were subject and the fate of their memorial (that of Goremykin) chiefly in the offended official *amour propre* of some individual Minister or Governor, in the existing bureaucratic pressure, and demanded the greatest possible liberty for the province, which their memorial did not envisage, giving the assurance that simultaneously with the cessation of oppression all the defects of provincial activity would disappear. The Conservative Press, on the contrary, turned its attention chiefly to the defects apparent in the province's

activity, and demanded, for their removal, an increasing administrative guardianship. The dispute thus moved in a bewitched circle; the province became a bad instrument of administration because it was oppressed; it had to be oppressed because it had become a bad instrument of administration. All the while the issue from this circle was very plain, but some did not see it; others, and they were doubtless in the majority, did not *wish* to see it, or were afraid to point it out. The province, no doubt, fell into decay because it was hedged in by abnormal conditions on the part of the Government, but it was impossible to alter these conditions, to grant the required freedom to the province, without a subsequent alteration in the self-glorious edifice of the Empire."

It may be that the Central Government was too distrustful, it may be that the governors often were prompted by personal egotism, at anyrate, it soon became apparent that the fundamental idea of the law of 1864 "very soon began to be realised, that the province proved to be a very good school of representative organisation, and that it was impossible both to give it its proper position and to give it the necessary development without altering the entire State edifice."

Unfortunately we are not able to follow further, even superficially, as has been done in the last pages, the highly-interesting account which this Minister gives of the relations and struggles between the provinces and the Government. The unsophisticated reader of the above, however, will, I suppose, look upon Monsieur Witte as a brilliant defender of the Liberal provincial institution, who merely omitted to utter the closing word, *i.e.*, the conclusion that the autocratic Government of Russia must be changed. He points out that this conclusion has been arrived at, not only by the provinces but by a considerable part of Society. Above all, there were twenty-five distinguished citizens of Moscow who, in the year 1880, presented to the then Minister of the Interior, Loris-Melikow, a petition to be handed to the Czar, in which they traced back the progress of the re-

volutionary activity in a great measure to the enforced silence of the provinces. "Russian Society," so the petition went on to say, "is more and more strengthened in the conviction that so extensive an Empire as ours, with its complicated social life, cannot be governed exclusively by State officials." And at the close: "The only means to save the country from its present condition lies in the calling together of an independent assembly of provincial representatives, in the participation granted to this assembly in the government of the nation, and in the working out of the necessary guarantee for the privileges of individual freedom of thought and of speech. So acute had the conflict become at the beginning of the "eighties." "The Government was on the horns of a dilemma; either it must grant an assured position to the provinces, give them chance of further development, and thus truckle to their demands, and thus enter openly upon the road to constitutionalism; or, on the other hand, it must preserve the foundation of autocratic Government, suppress finally every sort of independence and activity of the provinces, and incline decisively towards the principle of autocracy, a decisive advantage over the elective principle of *the Province*.

"Evidently Loris-Melikow decided to try cautiously the former way, as far as he may perhaps have had the intention of avoiding the dilemma altogether." He expressed himself in detail on this point before the representatives of the St Petersburg daily Press, and through them his programme was announced to the whole of Russia. "In reality this programme promised nothing definite, but the agitation in the provinces redoubled in activity, and Society thought to recognise the promise of a new course tending towards constitution." At the meeting of 1880 the representatives of a union, which called itself the "Provincial Union," ascertained the necessity "to obtain a Central representation of the people, with the unavoidable creation of a House of Representatives and of suffrage; that is to say, they decided on a broad democratic basis

to send petitions for the extension of provincial privileges and for the participation of the provinces in the Central Government. Indeed, the petitions were showered lavishly by the provinces, and it is remarkable that the provincial representatives "showed great moderation in their assents to the new direction of the policy of the Government." Their lively sympathy found expression chiefly in congratulatory addresses by the Provincial Assemblies to Loris-Melikow, to his being made by many magistrates freeman of their city. Loris - Melikow met their wishes. Senators were despatched to investigate the condition of things in the *gouvernements*, and their instructions contained very clear and definite inquiries as to the extension of provincial activity. All those unfavourable provincial conditions, which have been touched upon above, were to be investigated. Even before the close of the inquiries, Loris - Melikow proceeded to answer the questions. Towards the close of 1880 the Government called together the provinces "for the discussion of questions and for the alteration of a few decisions of the Ordinance of the 27th June 1874 with regard to the establishment of local governing bodies composed of peasants." The Government met the wishes of the provinces, more particularly with regard to national education. The unpopular Minister of "Popular Enlightenment," Count Tolstoi, was removed; his successor gave promises to the effect that the petitions of the provinces should be examined carefully. With the relations towards the Central Government, also those of the provinces with the local administrative bodies improved. After all attempts of the provinces to broach questions of political economy in the provinces (which in reality meant questions of national economy) had been suppressed for sixteen years, the Governor of Chernigov declared, on the 12th January 1881, at the opening of the Provincial Assembly, "The Government requires more than ever the advice of the province in many branches of political economy."

Loris-Melikow decided to take one great step further:

to call together elected members of the provinces and towns to the participation in legislative activity. The rumours of constitution increased. At the beginning of 1881 Loris-Melikow proceeded towards the realisation of his plan ; on the 28th January he placed before the Czar a draft for the establishment of a commission, consisting of members elected by the provinces, and wherever these had not been introduced, of persons who were to be invited by the Government. The head of this commission was to be a president chosen by the Czar, and this commission was to pave the way for the participation of the people in the Central Government, supported by several minor commissions, composed of representatives from the various branches of administration who were to be entrusted with the preparations of legislative proposals according to the decision of the Czar. This commission was to be an advisory one ; the bills discussed by the chief commission and prepared by the minor commissions were to be brought before the State Council by the Ministers, with their comments, and could be altered by the former ; the final decision was reserved to the monarch.

This was no constitution yet, but unmistakably, so says Witte, the representation of the people by election was introduced into the system of the legislature, and all the world understood that thus a further step had been taken towards the completion of provincial reforms, *i.e.*, that the Government had decided to grant a constitution. It was clear that a united Provincial Assembly must follow, which would be nothing else than the Prussian United Diet of 1848, and that indisputably this assembly would demand participation in legislative power and would obtain it in the end. Kennan<sup>1</sup> declared emphatically in his writing of the year 1890-91 that the ukase for the nomination of the commission was signed by the Czar on the 1st March 1881, and handed over to Loris-Melikow, and, what is more, after the perusal of the above-mentioned petition of the twenty-five citizens of Moscow, in which the

<sup>1</sup> Kennan, *The Last Declaration of the Russian Liberals.*

question of the Constitution appeared very clearly, and which had made a deep impression upon the monarch.

I am unable to enter further into the explanations of Witte with regard to this matter ; I must, however, mention that according to these accounts Loris-Melikow, as former Minister of the Interior, made to the new Czar, Alexander III., a representation of the measures approved by Alexander II., whereupon a special meeting of the Ministers was appointed for the 8th of March. What happened at this meeting, and at what conclusion they arrived, has never been made known, according to Witte.

From that moment matters with regard to the provinces took a rapid downward course. Alexander III. decided to return to the former way—to the strengthening of absolutism by the establishment of a strong Government. In the year 1882 Count Tolstoi was appointed to the Ministry of the Interior, and in the year 1890 a law was passed entirely replacing the law of 1864. "Count Tolstoi," so Monsieur Witte remarks caustically, "does not forsake the familiar policy of the Ministry of the Interior with regard to the provinces. He openly expressed in his projects the idea of abolishing the same ; under the semblance of a correct elaboration of the principles of self-government, he wished to maintain their outward form, but to deprive them of all real substance." Thus the law of 1890 became a new half-measure ; it did not abolish the province, but deprived it of character and colour ; it did not destroy the principle of universal suffrage, but gave it a colouring of the privileged classes ; it allowed the existence of elective posts but declared the officials occupying them to be Government servants ; it did not turn the provincial offices into Government bodies, but increased their tutelage by the Governor ; it left to the Provincial Assemblies their former independent decisions as regards most of the things in their care, but strengthened the Governor's merely negative right of veto. The province was entirely severed from the great mass of the country population, the peasants.

Between them both there was placed by the law of 1889 the power of the provincial lieutenants, who had nothing in common with the provinces. The law of 1890 was evidently a step in the direction towards the abolition of the provinces.

Nevertheless, they did not become the obedient tools of the Government. According to Witte, one may assert that the desired merging of their activity into that of the Government is not possible as long as the provinces have to look upon the Central administration as something hostile, as long as members elected by the province have no active share in their activity, as long as the laws do not appear as the outcome of the deliberations of these members. On the other hand, the distrust of the Government will not vanish as long as a shadow of independence remains to the province.

When Nicholas II. ascended the throne nine *gouvernements* protested in their addresses to the throne against the existing state of things, and begged for the participation of the provinces in the Legislature. Most of the other provinces expressed similar sentiments, although not in petitions. Witte considers this agitation, as showing itself in petition, to be far more serious than the vain and noisy opposition against the Government authorities. Although more pliable in form, the Minister goes on to say, it is, according to its contents, far more important than even the violent agitation of 1879 to 1883; it must not be forgotten that the latest agitation proceeds from the province maimed by the law of 1890.

No union with the Government bodies, no revival or success in their activities, no disappearance of political tendencies in the changed provinces, has taken place. *Vice versa* one notices in the new provinces a fresh increase of taxation upon those very needs of the people which should be supplied by the province; amongst others that of education, which, according to Goremykin, ought to be subject to the province. The feud between the provinces and the Government has grown, and the

indifferent attitude of the provincial members in the affairs of local administration has increased, and with it the actual dependence of the executive bodies on the Chancelleries. "Our local administration is in a sad and most abnormal condition."

In a final reflection Witte remarks: "Only in the event of one and the same principle applying to the highest as well as the lowest, to the central and local bodies alike, can true unity of administration be attained; the Government appears in reality as master in this matter; only under this condition are the local bodies enabled to become reliable executors of the regulations of the central authorities and can belong to them as 'their own,' not as 'aliens.' If the Government be once sure of all branches of administration, if the latter lends reliable support, exceptional measures become superfluous; they belong to the domain of exceptions. After having given a firm frame to its laws the Government may treat the expressions of personal and social activity, freedom of speech and of thought, calmly, only taking care that nobody, not even the administration, should step out of the frame of these laws, and by requiring of all an unhesitating obedience and unceasing servitude." The days of hesitation are past; "the Government has entered the path towards increase of absolutism and—the picture has changed once more."

Although this reproduction of the dissertations of the Minister is greatly condensed, the reader may notwithstanding have obtained an insight into the struggles of two conflicting principles, so important for the future of our great political neighbour. True, the picture has changed, and not only the picture of the struggle between the province and the Government, but the picture of the Minister himself as we saw him at the beginning of his dissertations. It seemed as though we were dealing with the brilliant champion of the oppressed provinces, and now we recognise in him the representative of bureaucratic absolutism. Yet, if this article should by chance find readers in Russia, I expect

that the champion of self-government would be listened to far more readily than the representative of autocracy and of Tschinownicism. This writing carries no conviction in the sense the Minister of Absolutism would have it, but neither does it awaken sympathy with the representatives of self-government. Highly gifted as we must consider Monsieur Witte to be, considering all his other successful labours, we cannot but marvel at the confession contained in his final reflection. Much though he may dread constitutionalism, we can scarcely understand how he is able to believe in the future of a system so evidently bankrupt as that which he expounds here. "Homogeneous principles" above as below, *i.e.*, the absolute will of the monarch; "unity in the administration," *i.e.*, bureaucratic centralisation; trust in the lower bodies, *i.e.*, complete dependence; all in all, the old well-known absolutism as it flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in Europe, and in Russia still in the days of Nicholas I. At anyrate there is nothing new that Witte teaches us. But what is the meaning of "the firm frames of the law" which, if once established and guarded by the police, would permit of the "independence of individuals and of societies," even the "freedom of thought and of speech"? Is not this the true and genuine old bureaucratic state which collapsed in 1855, and which Monsieur Witte is establishing once more? "Unresisting obedience," this Monsieur Witte demands above all, and his interpretation of reasonable self-government is nothing more than the independent administration of the estate by the landowner, of the factory by its proprietor, in short, of private interests by private persons and societies. The understanding for self-government as regards public affairs, for the educating, strengthening power of political self-government, for the great importance it has had for the nations and Governments of all civilised States, this we miss. Likewise the proof that the provinces failed to do their duty, were not equal to their task. They are not even accused of such defects, although the writer of the article could

doubtless have adduced sufficient material to prove the mistakes committed by the provinces. That so young an institution must have passed through many adverse experiences during the forty years of its existence, that it must have strayed many a time and have committed errors may be assumed without further investigation, and is, in fact, the case. Witte, however, pays tribute to the zeal, to the activity, to the successes of the provinces in their former freer position, only his point is not now—Does self-government work, and how could it work? He only sees that by its tendency to form one collective province it conjures up the spectre of a constitution which the Minister of the State will avoid at any cost, even at that of petrefaction, because the existence of the Empire, of the gigantic outward body, might possibly be endangered thereby. This point of view must seem to any political person a doubtful, almost desperate one, more particularly at a time when the same Minister exerts all the powers of the State for the creation of an industrial middle class. Does the Minister seriously believe that an empire which is developing industrially and commercially between the Polar Sea and the Pacific Ocean, between the Pamir and the Vistula, can be ruled from St Petersburg by the "homogeneous" principle of the State mechanism? According to the experiences at the disposal of other Europeans, this is impossible. The very Minister who endeavoured more than any other before him to awaken social and intellectual life in the Empire would have to fear that with the return to bureaucratic absolutism one hand should destroy and paralyse what the other created. Bureaucratic absolutism would befit much more the system of "Pobedonoszew" or the oppression of the entire intellectual development of the people. In Turkey this system may be suitable, but does not Monsieur Witte contribute more than anyone else towards increasing the dissimilarity between Turkey and Russia? He quotes a whole catalogue of administrative writings in favour of his conclusions, yea, he relies on a number of articles which, if he had

possessed and read them years ago, would probably have sent him to Siberia instead of to the head of the Government. If, instead of having all these writings compiled by the "compilers" of his memorial, he had read even a small portion only himself, so great a mind as his could not have failed to have adopted a more statesmanlike conception of the moral powers of the people and of the political tasks of the State. The writer of the memorial could not have escaped seeing that the many scientific authorities which he quotes leave no doubt whatever of the perniciousness of a State uniformity and of bureaucratic centralisation of the kind and extent the Minister has in view. To waste another word on the scientific point of view of these experiences of European State life, which have become commonplaces, is wholly superfluous. All the learning—not of Monsieur Witte, whom it would be arrogant to tax with the responsibility, but that of the "compilers"—I take the liberty of refuting by a quotation from a novel. Bulwer-Lytton says in his *Alice*, bk. vi. chap. ii., of the centralisation of the Government in France: "A principle which ensures momentary power, but which ends every time with a sudden annihilation of the State. Centralisation is really a dangerous tonic, which certainly seems to strengthen the system but drives the blood to the head and is wont to produce apoplexy or madness. By centralisation the provinces are weakened." Monsieur Witte need only have read *Alice*. But as he has relied too much on his "compilers," the result of his inquiries is as shallow and mechanical a conception—as far as conception and programme agree internally—as might possibly be consistent with the point of view of a district police inspector, but not with that of the leading Minister of a great Empire. If the Minister himself had only studied Russian history up to the reforms of Alexander II. he would know that that which he wishes to strengthen anew as the only sound basis of the Russian Government is the self-same exhausted system which led to these reforms. Bureaucracy pure

and simple in Russia has become bankrupt, and to establish it once more is playing a dangerous game. But the intention of the Minister is to escape a game even more dangerous in his opinion. It is, when the question is put as neatly as this, not easy to give an answer. But even the Minister found it very difficult, as I assumed above. Still, he has given it.

He wishes to uphold the unity of Russia by self-government and by administrative centralisation. He only knows of two possibilities—self-government or a constitution. He does not see that there are compromises, that, for instance, the best-administered parts of Russia, i.e., the Baltic Provinces and Finland, have reached their prosperity by a more or less free self-government under absolutism and without a Russian constitution. He does not see that for fear or decay of the whole he strives towards a condition of things which must have paralysis or an explosion as a natural sequence. He does not see that if his own shoulders are able to bear such a burden as he bears to-day the future burden of the State, recreated according to his view, cannot be borne profitably by any central government. He calculates, as Financial Minister, that State officials are cheaper than provincial officials, and does not see that the State officials are very often bad because they are too cheap. Yea, it may be that the Financial Minister who lets slip through his fingers very nearly 2000 million roubles per annum may think it more advantageous if the 88 millions also which are produced and spent by the provinces were at his disposal. He possesses a stupendous capacity for work and wishes to become Atlaa. Should he never have any misgivings as to the practicability of his undertaking? For the present he seems to believe in himself and in his system.

In reviewing the above-sketched history of the Russian provinces it is striking how exactly the crises in the life of the provinces coincide with the great internal agitations of the times, and especially with the crisis in the lives of the monarchs themselves. The

death of Nicholas I., tragic from a political point of view, led to the great reforms of his successor. But even before these reforms had ripened into the institution of provinces the student riots broke out at the beginning of the "sixties," and in 1863 the Polish rebellion. This had a cooling effect upon Liberalism, and although the provincial statute was passed in 1864, a reaction took place simultaneously in the system of government; the first stumbling-blocks were thrown into the way of the new institution. Then, after 1866, there followed the attempts upon the life of the Czar and of his Ministers, and simultaneously the fetters of the provinces were made more heavy year by year. Finally the agitation in the provinces and towns becomes threatening; in the Centre people perceive that they have gone too far in their retrograde movement. Then follows the address of the twenty-five Moscow citizens, whose weight is great enough to force the Czar to consent to the appointment of a commission which is to prepare legislation and to obtain his signature for the ukase. On the same day, on the 1st March 1881, Alexander II. is murdered. The leading Minister, Loris-Melikow, and most of his colleagues still hold fast to the Liberal programme. On the 8th March there is a conference as to whether the ukase on the appointment of the commission is to be executed. Thus we can help the discretion of the Minister who will not talk out of office—most of the Ministers are convinced of the consent of the conferring ministerial meeting as well as of that of the new Czar. Then all of a sudden the chief procurator of the Synod, Pobedonoszew, rises and votes against it, not only on his own behalf but on that of the Czar, whom he has won over secretly. In spite of the majority the ukase remained a dead letter. Pobedonoszew went forth as victor, and led henceforth, like a second Père Lachaise, the struggle against all Liberal movements. And by what means was not only Alexander III., but even so conscientious and just a monarch as Alexander II., brought to forswear himself? By fear. With this

wretched instrument much has been accomplished since.

In this memorial of the year 1899 Monsieur Witte says: "The Provincial Assemblies are now deprived of almost every vestige of independence and placed under strict administrative tutelage; they have received a slight class colouring; their executive bodies have received a bureaucratic varnish and have been placed into dependence on the Governor; moreover, a strict regulation of the provincial activity and its reduction to a minimum are to be carried out shortly."

Well, this is honestly spoken, and, as experience has shown, also honestly acted. Upon the 12th (25th) June 1900 a law ordained that the provincial tax on immoveables could not be raised by more than 3 per cent. per annum, and as this is the chief source of income for the provinces their whole activity has been brought to a standstill. At the same time they lost their independence since their right of final decision was changed into the power of drawing up petitions and proposals. Truly this is thorough revision. And how was this law of the 12th June 1900, which completely paralysed the provinces, predicted by Witte in 1899, passed? According to the supplement of the editor of the *Memorial* it was managed by nineteen votes in the State Council being against ten votes for the proposal, and by the Czar voting with the minority. The Ministers of Finances, Pobedonoszew and Sipagin together, are capable of much, and the Financial Minister most of all. On this account Germans ought to be doubly interested in his memorial. For although every cultured person to-day will be interested in the story of social struggles, of which hitherto little has penetrated into publicity, we shall have to take special notice of the expressions of a man who has shown the will and the power of forcing the great neighbouring Empire into paths which may remain decisive for a long time to come. Decisive not as to whether Russia is to be ruled by bureaucracy or by a decentralised self-government, for we have no faith in the stability of

Monsieur Witte's system, or rather in the system represented by him. The question is: What will be the end of this "last effort of an absolutely bureaucratic régime," as the publisher of the *Memorial* styles it? The feeling of the impracticability of this régime, of the necessity of breaking the spell, of the need for freer movement in the principal domains of moral and national life, for ecclesiastical and political freedom and independence, this feeling which almost amounts to a public opinion, is very strong and very prevalent in Russia to-day, even in the highest strata of officialism. But the Minister who, in point of fact, is the ruling spirit, opposes this struggle for air and light with the assurance that self-government shall be granted, although in the domain of private interest alone, which in European language means "no self-government will be given." It is hardly credible that Monsieur Witte should place himself finally and absolutely on the side of unquestioned maintenance of autocracy in this conflict between autocracy and self-government. By drawing the contrast so sharply he reserves to himself the choice — this it is that many will read between the lines of his memorial. And if Monsieur Witte has only read a portion of those sources quoted here, he is no doubt well acquainted with the teaching to be derived from the French history of 1789. Then there were two financial Ministers, Turgot and Necker, who might possibly have avoided the horrors of the Revolution if they had possessed the power to execute their plans. What were these plans, and what the means? Turgot attempted decentralisation by organising independent bodies in parishes and districts; Necker wished to supplement them by provincial bodies. Thus a kind of self-government was to be established and developed which would have relieved the central organism. The Ministers fell, the reforms were not carried out, and — the Empire collapsed. The Financial Minister we are dealing with here is stronger than both Turgot and Necker were. Should he really not have thought of

those men but of Calonne and the Vendée who is compiled his memorial? Have we none to thank but of Jules Polignac and the Ordinances? Russia is not France, but, after all, Russians, too, are not quite human beings.



## CHAPTER XV

### BUREAUCRACY

ONE may be in doubt whether the true nature of the Financial Minister, Witte, is revealed in the brilliant counsel for the accused Provincial Assemblies, as which he appears in the first part of his *Memorial*, or in the rigid bureaucrat of absolutism, as which he appears in the second part. Monsieur Witte has certainly not written about the history of their ill-usages to the detriment of Provincial Assemblies, according to the opinion of the reading public, nor has he denied that their influence has been beneficent in many ways. Are then the Provincial Assemblies really incapable of fulfilling their nearest duties? For they were created in the first instance for the purpose of fostering national life in the province, in the district, in the parish—a purpose for which the Russian State official very rarely has any aptitude. The population was called to individual activity—these were the words of an official or semi-official order of the year 1863—and with this end in view independent bodies were created and charged with the “preservation of local interest.” Side by side with these the new municipal organisation of 1878, also based upon election, was to accomplish in its domain the same as the Provincial Assembly did in the country district. This town administration, too, has had to suffer much from the jealousy and tyranny of officialism. But it was not feared, because there are only very few large towns in Russia, and of these few are large enough to obtain any political importance.

The Provincial Assemblies have given far more reasons for complaint, as I mentioned before. Yet everywhere in the *gouvernements* you see the good results of their activity. What was the outlook in the heart of the country before the establishment of the Provincial Assembly, and what is it now?

We have seen that the Provincial Assemblies defray more than two-thirds of all expenses for the national school. "The knowledge of reading and writing," so we read in Nowikow,<sup>1</sup> was *nil*, since the former parish schools of the Government Crown Land Administration can hardly be counted as "something." For every district there was one medical man. Nothing was done for the soul or body of the peasant. Nowadays, in one way or another, the school has begun to be a popular necessity; compared with former days there are ten times as many medical men, there are fewer women quacks, and an attempt is being made to fight Epizootics. All this is the result of provincial activity. Apparently self-government attracts a number of energetic persons who would otherwise remain outside the pale of the village life. Society as an active factor has borne abundant fruit. If, further, all the obstacles in the road of this individual activity are taken into account, all the spokes which are put into the wheels of provincial activity, the results of this activity are more closely arrived at. This is the active side of the province; now let us consider its passive side. We will take two neighbouring districts with the similar conditions of life, and compare the activity of their respective provinces. We see that in the one school life is excellent. The schools are the spoilt child of the Provincial Assembly; in the neighbouring district, however, there are hardly any provincial schools at all. In the one district medical life centres in itself all the activity of the Provincial Assemblies; there are many hospitals, the sick easily find relief in their sufferings; in the other, medical life in the village is

<sup>1</sup> Nowikow, p. 147.

almost looked upon as a superfluous luxury. In the one, four times as much is spent upon roads as in the other. The same state of things prevails in the rural districts of the various *gouvernements*. Two years ago a Russian paper (*Nov. Vremja*) compared *gouvernements* which possessed Provincial Assemblies to nine, formerly Lithuanian-Polish, so-called Western *gouvernements* who had none. According to this paper there was but one doctor in the Western *gouvernements* to every 83,000 inhabitants; in the Russian *gouvernements* with Provincial Assemblies one to every 35,000 inhabitants. In the former there was one school to every 7346 inhabitants, in the latter to 1919 inhabitants. These figures, no doubt, spoke at that time, in favour of Goremykin's wish to introduce Provincial Assemblies into the Western districts, and there are many more proofs of the provinces' activity. It would not be astonishing, however, if the impoverished nobility were inclined to give up the struggle with their own needs, with those of the people and with the ill-will of an all-powerful bureaucracy. It is this diversity in their respective powers of resistance which their unequal activity is an expression of.

This very lack of equality, of easily-controlled uniformity, officialism has a horror of; to this in the upper strata is added the fear of the constitutional tendencies of these provinces. And yet experience points again and again to the fact that it is of these self-governing bodies that help is most likely to be forthcoming for the many needs of national life. Especially so during the famines. A conference of Russian medical men held in the year 1899 at Kasan declared the Provincial Assembly to be the most competent power for raising the standard of medical life. The care of the people has been the business of the Provincial Assemblies hitherto, and certainly it has not, on the whole, been administered worse than by State officials. As soon, however, as a failure of crops was announced anywhere, immediately there began a conflict between the Provincial Assembly and bureau-

cracy ; on the one hand, the existence of a state of want was maintained ; on the other, it was denied. They quarrelled over the amount of help required, over the purchase of corn, its distribution, etc., and the result was, of course, disastrous to the starving people. The help mostly came too late, or not at all, or in a useless fashion.<sup>1</sup> At last the Government has taken matters in hand ; from and after the summer 1901 onward the Provincial Assemblies are to have nothing more to do with the care of the people. What do we see now in the necessitous Eastern *gouvernements*? The old complaint—the Government has done too little, the corn which it purchased does not arrive in time, is kept lying somewhere and scurvy breaks out (March 1902). The Press also is beginning to announce that the Provincial Assemblies are to be deprived of the right to elect their chief officials, who henceforth will be appointed by the Government. Thus they would become Government property, and there would be an end of the beginnings of self-government. Then, too, the last attempt to save the old landed nobility as the leading class would have been made. For a nobility without public rights and duties must ever and everywhere decay as a class and become a drawing-room nobility.

In Germany we know from our own experience how in a State with absolute monarchs, be they ever so conscientious, bureaucracy easily gets its way. From the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in the year 1818 to March of 1848 bureaucratic fungi (and not in Prussia alone) have clogged the blood of the body politic to such an extent that a weaker nation would scarcely have been capable at the end of the same century of a prosperity such as that we have experienced. The old German collection of small States has, in spite of all the misery it entailed, perhaps had the merit of not allowing officialism to sink to the depths of depravity into which it easily falls in a large Empire. In a small

<sup>1</sup>*Famine-stricken Russia*, by Lehmann and Paryus. Stuttgart,

State the eye of the Minister penetrates into the smallest villages, every sort of opinion easily becomes public opinion and thus gains a restricting influence upon the State official. The Russian Minister never knows the officials in the provinces personally, and there exists no Russian public opinion, and there never will exist, except upon a very few and general questions. In the province people may be quite united in their condemnation of an official person or action, but this provincial opinion will have great difficulty in gaining an influence upon officialism, and even more difficulty in obtaining a hearing of the Central Government. Not a provincial but a personal opinion will have some chance of a hearing. Thus the official is only subject to very slight supervision both from above and from Society, and thus bribery is more universal in Russia to-day than in the years after the reforms of Alexander II., and not much less than under Nicholas I. Embezzling in the Commissariat during the last Chinese imbroglio seems to have been little inferior to that of 1877. The only officials whom one cannot accuse of this failing, who have preserved their independent opinion, and who stand up for it, are those of the higher and highest courts of justice; and these are the only ones who, according to law, have hitherto been independent in their official activity of the tyranny of superiors or of the administration. Thus, freedom and integrity go hand in hand. With regard to other matters the above-quoted writing says: "Bureaucracy is spreading everywhere and is endeavouring to entangle the whole of Russian life in the chains of tyranny and of formalism."<sup>1</sup> Under these circumstances the ever-progressing centralisation of administration certainly possesses the power, but only in a limited degree the moral efficiency, of the official class. On the other hand it has to a great extent paralysed the sense of responsibility and the interest in public affairs in large sections of the population.

We have seen of what immense material resources the

<sup>1</sup> Russian Review for *Commerce and Industries*, 1901.

Ministry of Finance disposes. With a Budget of expenditure greatly exceeding 300 million roubles a host of officials to the number of hundreds of thousands are being maintained. The Ministry of Domain disposed in the year 1899 on the State railways alone of more than 339,000 servants. If, in addition, the Crown lands and forests, the posts and telegraphs and other Government institutions, are counted, the sum-total of persons in the civil employment of the State will probably far exceed one million.

We have seen that 57 per cent. of the revenue of the Budget is raised by State administration. The State is proprietor of two-fifths of Russian soil, and this refers to Russia in Europe alone and does not include the innumerable Asiatic Crown and appanage lands.<sup>1</sup> Although most of it consists of forests, there yet remains enough arable land for the Minister of Russian Crown Lands to be the agent, not only of the greatest forests but also of the largest agricultural concern in the world. The State is further proprietor of railways, of the brandy monopoly, etc. The profit derived from these enterprises fills the coffers of the State but diminishes the income of its subjects. A profitable employment from which the State draws such sums, and from which, if it were well exploited by private individuals, even greater profits could be realised, private enterprise has been deprived of. In many ways the industrial life of the people is being restricted in favour of the Treasury. This is a step towards the ideal State of the social democrats. If Government activity were to expand, if the tobacco trade, the sugar refineries were monopolised, the revenue of the Exchequer might be further swelled and socialised, Government production, i.e., turning into Government property the means of production, would be approached by another considerable step. However, one must remember that the State, i.e., the people, will not become richer, because labour and profits have been transferred from private hands into those of the State officials, because national economy has been absorbed and

<sup>1</sup> Compare Trubnikow, *The Wealth of Russia*, p. 156.

replaced by political economy. Monsieur Witte does not always seem quite proof against this fallacy. The introduction of the brandy monopoly may be advantageous to the Treasury, but at the expense of the population, for it is simply a new kind of tax. Wherever the monopoly made its way the communes in town and village lost their revenue from the licences for the sale of spirits, which they raised in thousands of public-houses in the whole Empire. The town of Moscow, for instance, calculated this loss at a hundred thousand roubles per annum, and begged for an indemnity, but in vain; every village had at least one, often several bars, which have to-day been replaced by the so-called monopoly shop and thus deprive the villagers of their earnings. The loss of their licences causes a great deficit in the village Budget, for these public-houses often were their chief source of revenue. Thus this revenue of the commune found its way into the Government till. To this must be added other losses of the tax-payer to the State. The Treasury is endeavouring to restrict the competition, not only of the private brandy but of other alcoholic drinks. In the south of the Empire wine cultivation is increasing. According to an announcement in a newspaper (*Rossija*) the Financial Minister has lately advised the framing of a law which will render more difficult the sale of wine. The wine-growers are to lose the right of opening shops for the sale of wine wholesale and retail, whereby the viniculture must naturally suffer and the Treasury enrich itself. The realisation of this project does not appear improbable, in view of the experience of the north with regard to beer. There a number of inns in town and country were forced to close on account of the withdrawal of their licence; in Livonia alone 600 inns, which made considerable profits, had to be closed, whereby communications, especially by carriers, has been made increasingly difficult in winter, as no stabling is to be found. In the three Baltic Provinces the consumption of beer was very considerable, and the loss which the proprietors of inns and of breweries suffer by

this measure is correspondingly high, since no compensation is granted. The advantage lies once more with the brandy-selling Treasury. In the heart of the Empire, where neither beer nor wine are customary, the fiscal brandy reigns supreme. Another danger threatens the Government licence—the temperance movement. It was encouraged officially, yea, the Ministry of Finance itself called to life a central organisation, a "temperance curatorium." Drink was to be fought officially, tea-shops were to be opened, leagues be founded, etc. In every district a committee was formed, with a president chosen from the nobility; this was to work against drunkenness and was dependent upon the *gouvernement* committee. In the country, however, these endeavours are zealously fought by the officials of the self-same Ministry, and difficulties are placed in the way of the committees. Frequently, and in many places, the population itself attempted to deal with drunkenness by petitioning for the abolition or redistribution of the monopoly shops. The following example is one among many: The Provincial Assembly of the district of Wolkow, in the *gouvernement* of Kharkov, petitioned, as announced in the official paper of the *gouvernement*, that henceforth no fiscal brandy-shops should be erected in the squares and streets of the villages in the vicinity of churches, schools and communal offices. The wild scenes of drunkenness were to be kept as remote as possible from these institutions, and the danger of missing the way to the church, the school or the commune office be averted. The petition was sent by the Provincial Assembly of the *gouvernement* to the Ministerial Committee, and was refused there. The interests of the Treasury are predominant, the interests of the people suffer, temperance is on the decrease. The political economist, Buch, states that in European Russia alone, during the period of the brandy monopoly from 1895-1900, on an average  $24\frac{1}{3}$  million pails of brandy were consumed, compared to, roughly, 23 millions in the preceding five years.<sup>1</sup> In connection with this fact the increasing poverty of

<sup>1</sup> *European Messenger*, October 1901.

the greater part of the population must not be lost sight of. The official report of the State Control Office on the Budget for 1900 gives the following figures: Brandy has brought the Treasury in this year a profit of 316,807,550 roubles, *i.e.*, about 6½ millions more than in the preceding year, and about 24 millions more than was estimated. Of these 40 millions came from the provinces, where the sale is monopolised. According to this the monopoly seems to increase the consumption of alcoholic drinks, in spite of failures of crops and of poverty, and to profit the Treasury. The Financial Minister contributed towards the struggle against drunkenness about one per cent. of the profits of the brandy sale in order to cover himself with a sort of moral cloak under which to hide the zeal with which the consumption of brandy is encouraged on the other hand. Morals are disregarded and the monopoly brandy is victorious.

This purely fiscal, or purely financial, treatment of the sources of revenue is apparent in other spheres of Economic life. Even to-day, in an agricultural country like Russia, so high a duty is placed upon iron and upon agricultural machinery that the peasant drives without an iron tyre to his wheel and the farmer has to pay twice as much for his machines as his competitor in the West.

The importation of artificial manure is handicapped by a duty, and the export of manure is favoured. Bone meal and oil cakes are produced in considerable quantities, but are almost entirely sold abroad, thus having a favourable influence on the balance of trade. In a country in which bribery is traditional the whole of the economic and intellectual life is placed in the hands of officials. Trade and industries are to be furthered, yet no tradesman can obtain a railway truck for his goods without bribery, no merchant knows whether his wares will reach their destination to-morrow or in four weeks' time. Meanwhile, the goods are spoilt on the way, for the state of disorganisation on the State railways seems permanent and greatly

interferes with trade. In Russia all and everything is drawn into the whirlpool of bureaucratic supervision, of State interference and administration. The only great shipping businesses for foreign trade, the so-called Volunteer Fleet and the Danube Shipping Company, cost the Treasury every year large sums in subsidies, and are, in point of fact, placed under semi-Governmental administration. The last-named company has the purpose of furthering Russian trade on the Danube ; but the trade is so insignificant that although the company only possesses vessels with an aggregate tonnage of 281,000 tons, there is not sufficient cargo even for these. Yet the State pays to this fleet a yearly subsidy of 312,000 roubles. The dock charges, which hitherto flowed into the tills of the sea-towns, are to become State property, and in return the State undertakes the repair of the docks, etc. "The Society of the Red Cross," so sighs Nowikow, "has been turned into a department of benevolence with sub-divisions and inspectors. Benevolence has been centralised in St Petersburg." Every sort of public activity insidiously glides into the hands of officials, in the one case because it is badly managed, in the other, in spite of being well managed. The cause for this is to be sought just as much in the reigning system of self-glorious bureaucracy as in the need and the tendency of the upper classes to seek Government employment, by which the latter is driven to a continual increase of Tschinownicism. Thousands of poor noblemen, thousands of starving "popes' sons" and sons of officials, beg for appointments, and the Government procures them by taking over the administration of private and of communal labour. Equalisation, assimilation, simplification, in short, uniformisation, often serve as a reason, or at least as a justification, even as a pretext. But the strength of the nation is being sapped in this way ; dishonesty in the administration is on the increase, and in spite of railways and of telegraphs the Government is less able to keep its army of officials in order. This exaggerated system of bureaucracy necessarily leads to

a condition of anarchy which is to-day felt everywhere above and below. Centralisation and uniformisation go hand-in-hand everywhere; they are the millstones between which independent activity and national independence are ground to powder.

How many sources of income which promote free and independent labour, the spirit of enterprise and of individual activity, are thus left? Unconsciously, we say, agriculture is free. Certainly this is free, except for the fact that it is employed by the State as a machine for the maintenance of the balance of trade; in other respects it is neglected.

Equally great forward strides has the interference of the State made in the sphere of intellectual life.<sup>1</sup> In the year 1863 Alexander II. had issued a University Statute which, taking the University of Dorpat as a model, placed the administration and appointment of university teachers into the hands of the pedagogic body. From a personal conflict between the then powerful editors of the *Moscow News* (Katkoff and Leontjew) and the Council of the Moscow University, there started, at the close of the "seventies," a campaign of these men and of the leaders of reaction against the liberties of the universities, which ended with the complete gagging of the pedagogic body by the new statute of 1884. Since then all the university chairs are filled by the Minister, the students are placed under police supervision, the curriculum is prescribed by the Ministers, the corporations of Fellows are dissolved, and the professor has become as dependent a mandarin as all other State servants. The consequence has been that the independent, frequently the most efficient, men have drawn back from entering the profession of teaching, and that the lack of scientific teachers, quite sufficient hitherto, has to be artificially increased. We see the further consequences of State interference in the fact that the disorders in all academic institutions have by no means ceased because the universities have

<sup>1</sup> Compare the excellent article: *Russia on the Eve of the Twentieth Century*. Berlin, 1900. Steinitz (Russian).

been deprived of their privileges. Since the summer of 1901 a complete reaction seems to be preparing itself. But what the new Minister of Public Enlightenment has in view is nothing more than uniformity, superficially liberal, it is true, but a great contrast to the system which Messrs Witte and Sipagin represent.

In the domain of jurisdiction this bureaucratic-centralising principle has also committed burglary. I mentioned before that the independence granted to the law courts by the legislation of 1863 drew the best elements of the country into this profession and purified it morally as much as has probably never been the case before in Russia in any Government department. The first grades of the Justices of the Peace and a perpetual membership of the second grade were elective offices, and fulfilled their duties on the whole to the general satisfaction. "Suddenly," so the above-mentioned article goes on to say, "Russia was startled one fine morning by the announcement that nobody knew why the Justices of the Peace were abolished and replaced by the Provincial Captains.

This is one of the most incomprehensible acts of the legislature ever met with in history." This recognisedly good institution was in, the year 1889, "without any cause whatever thrown out of the window and replaced by complete arbitrariness." The Provincial Captains are not elected officials, but are appointed by the Government, and, moreover, it is said preferably from amongst the nobility. The new law even declared this latter circumstance to be a proof that this reform owed its existence to the especial favour with which the Czar viewed the nobility. "It is clear," says our writer, "that the Czar in this case was grossly deceived," as had been his fate with the decree of the University Statute of 1884, when several Ministers, under the leadership of the chief procurator, Pobedonoszhev, performed a farce in which this ecclesiastic dignitary, apparently defending the project of reform, was vanquished, and urged the monarch to

the comforting explanation, "You see the majority is against you; I must confirm the statute." The sly Jesuit of Orthodoxy laughed in his sleeve, for the statute was principally his own work.

For the office of Provincial Captain no sort of qualifications or preparatory training are required. The Provincial Captains administer the lower branches of jurisdiction and of administration, they are all-powerful with regard to the peasants, very powerful at the provincial elections. In the year 1900 they numbered, in thirty-six *gouvernements*, 2012, of whom 880 had received their education in military schools and 473 had visited universities.<sup>1</sup> Although the Provincial Captains have proved their efficiency abundantly, they nevertheless belong to the great army of dependent Tschin bearers, and tend to increase centralisation. For this important lower Government post the States are deprived of suffrage. "In Russian Government spheres," says the above writer, "the tendency to upset everything and to throw it to the ground prevails. The recently-transplanted jurisdiction is threatening to disappear from the face of the Russian Empire." It must, however, be added, in honour of jurisdiction, that in the higher courts, especially in the Senate, the law finds even to-day protection, the last remnant though it be, against the arbitrariness of officialism. Thither the last remnant of independence, of conscience and of courage have fled, as of yore in France, into the Parliaments.

With religious persecution one is pretty well acquainted by the Press and by the writings of Count Leo Tolstoi and others. Slight though the inclination towards religious intolerance in the Russian people actually is, the leaders of the State Church are nevertheless endeavouring to incite them to intolerance. In the reports of the chief procurator, Pobedonoszhev, to the monarch, the un-Orthodox Faiths are ever accused of damaging Orthodoxy and of persecuting it in all sorts of ways, which is a simple distortion of facts. The

<sup>1</sup> *Russkoje Bogatstwo* (*Russia's Wealth*), April 1901.

Synod, the ecclesiastical Central office, keeps its army of Church officials, the lay clergy, in dark ignorance but in external obedience. The lay clergy as a class have taken over from their former date of seclusion a strong class tradition. But the popes' sons exercise, as it must be assumed, a decomposing influence upon the clergy, from which they hail, and should a serious popular movement ever be set on foot the ill-used village clergy will probably be found siding with their sons and not with the Synod. For the Synod is a Government office, just like any other Ministry, only with regard to the monarch more powerful than every Minister. Led by a man like Pobedonoszew, so little chary of the means he employs, despotically centralised as it is, this office does not only stand to-day in antagonism to the widespread desire for freedom of conscience amongst the upper classes, but urges, since the death of the tolerant Czar, Alexander II., the Government to the adoption of the harsh and frequently cruel measures of which we hear and which are so foreign to the spirit of the Russian people.

The facility with which to-day, thanks to railways and telegraphs, all things may be carried from the most remote provinces to St Petersburg for criticism and decision is the reason that all things naturally flow thither, and that, *vice versa*, the Central office decides what has to be done in every village. The decision is often in complete contradiction to reality, completely senseless, often even impracticable; more frequently even it remains a dead letter by reason of the laziness of the lower executive offices. Generally, however, complete paralysation of provincial activity and a dull sense of expectation of all movement from the Centre follow in its train. In the Centre, on the other hand, the incapacity to see and administer provincial affairs correctly is ever increasing with the accumulating mass of working material.

The following case is an example taken from a Russian paper of recent date (*Russk. Viedom.*), to which others might be added daily: "As is evident from the

dates of the concessioning of industrial establishments in the two capitals during the years 1896-1900, the affairs regarding the erection of sausage factories, of locksmiths' workshops, of smithies, of establishments for the dry cleaning of clothes, of cardboard factories and lace factories which do not employ more than one workman, have been laid before the Financial Ministry—that is to say, matters which, according to their nature, did not even require a concession from lower officials. What amusing things actually do happen is shown in the affair of the concessioning of a dyeing establishment with one workman, the water of which was estimated at 5 vredo (pails) per month. The decision in this case dragged on for over a year. In turn it was laid before the police, the provincial council, the medical board, the governor, and, finally, the Financial Minister. Equally great difficulties are placed in the way of agricultural-technical and home-industrial establishments, for the concessioning of which the starting-point is always the same principle as that regulating factories with thousands of workmen."

An example of the incapacity of the Central Government to master the accumulated mass of working material, in spite of its enormous army of officials, is furnished by the fate which has overtaken the census of 1897. During five years the commission appointed for the working out of the accumulated material has given no sign of life beyond the fact that it is unable to cope with the matter. During these five years it has cost 4 millions and published nothing. But the centralising zeal is great enough to refuse every co-operation of provincial factors. The States of Livonia keep in their record offices efficient and well-tried statistical departments, so they asked the Government to leave to them the working out of matters relating to the census in Livonia. The Government would thus at anyrate have obtained a piece of work able to serve as a pattern, and, moreover, free of cost. But the request was refused; such separatism could not be tolerated. In turning over the pages of a few numbers of the official Govern-

ment organ, the *Government Messenger*, one cannot but marvel at the Czar's activity. In the spring of 1899, in the "Circular for the Pedagogical District of Riga," the following "most august decree" was to be read: "His Majesty the Emperor has, in view of the most respectful report of the Administrator of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, of the 15th October 1898, most graciously consented that the pupil of the seventh class of the High School for Girls at Reval, Sinaida Koshevnikow by name, is to be exempt from the teaching of German on account of her very delicate health." The twelve labours of Hercules must seem as child's play compared to the burden of labour which lies upon the Czar of Russia.

In conclusion, one more example of the "Paper Administration" of this gigantic Empire. Somebody has calculated that if one of the Ministers were to set out on a journey abroad and accomplish it, all the offices in the Empire would be informed of this event by official notices to the number of seventeen thousand.

Considering the boundless accumulation of power in the Central offices, and the equally boundless concentration of business, it is unavoidable that within the ring of these Central offices conditions of anarchy should prevail. One Government Department rises up against another, treaties are formed between two or three ministries against others, some are governed despotically, others almost revolutionarily. The Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, or of Education, used to cling to military discipline in school affairs; this, of course, meant a chronic state of disorder in all academic institutions, until finally the Minister, Monsieur Bogolegow, was assassinated. About the same period the various schools under the administration of the Financial Ministry were conducted in a liberal fashion. This self-same Financial Minister is, on the whole, a dictator who crushes the provinces, issues decree upon decree by which the expenditure and income of whole classes of citizens are disposed of, just as his colleagues, the Home Minister and the Minister for War. Jurisdiction has to

defend itself on all sides against the caprice of the other offices, Agriculture fights with the Finances, the Home Ministry with the Minister of Popular Enlightenment. Yet all alike maintain that they have to guard the absolute power of the Czar.

About three years ago the following affair took place:<sup>1</sup> The present Minister of the Interior, Sipägin, was chief of the office of petitioners of the Emperor. He handed to his master a project which explained that the essence of autocracy consists in the capacity of the ruler to decide upon all affairs and to be a place of refuge to his people. For this reason the chief of the office of petitioners should obtain the right to accept all petitions relating to matters of a private nature or relating to matters referring to administrative offices or law courts, and to let the monarch decide upon them by simply placing them before him. Monsieur Sipägin would, if his plan had obtained the approval of the Cabinet Council and of the Emperor, have become a dictator. This affair shows what kind of position the present Minister of the Interior occupies with regard to the other Government Departments, yea, even with regard to the Senate and Cabinet Council. These are conditions which necessarily result from hypertrophy of the brain, which word alone characterises the distribution of power in modern Russia. Perchance the author of the writing in question is right when he accuses the reign of Alexander III. of having had a demoralising influence upon the highest Government circles. "In Russia," he says, "the moral standard of the highest spheres of Government has never been a high one, but under Alexander III. it has reached a level scarcely to be credited."

<sup>1</sup> *Russia on the Eve of the Twentieth Century.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### BUREAUCRACY (*continued*)

THE idea is very prevalent that so immense an Empire as Russia cannot be governed except from the Centre and as a monarchy. We have seen that the man who to-day exercises the greatest influence, Monsieur Witte, is of this opinion also, or at least poses as the defender of it. Indeed, it is hard to conceive how these vast tracts of land are to be ruled by a Parliament and simultaneously from the Centre. We therefore take for granted the necessity of the monarchical form of government. It does not follow, however, that because the form of government must be that of a monarchy in order to uphold the Empire that the government is good, and a pertinent question would be—whether these vast lands must necessarily form this Empire and must have this centralistic form of government. For ultimately the welfare of the subjects and not the form and power of government are the sense and reason of all State life. If it be proved that the centralistic form of autocracy only facilitates governments, but not good governments, then the conclusion must be arrived at that the Russia of to-day cannot be lasting. Then one would be reminded once more of the unhappy prince, Alexai Petrowitsch, who died because he wished to know nothing of a civilising Russian world power.

As long as from St Petersburg commands could only be sent by three or four high roads into the country, "Heaven was high and the Czar far off"; but railways and telegraphs have changed all this. The Czar is no longer far off, anywhere, not even in Vladivostock, and

his Ministers approach men and matters more closely than is good for the latter. They too easily imagine that their presence, that of their officials, is necessary in every corner of the Empire, that their influence must be omnipresent, that their comfort requires an ever-increasing concentration of interests and business in the residence. They centralise the more zealously the less they trust in the efficiency, the integrity, the industry of their subordinates, the more inferior the material is from which they choose these subordinates, and they soon arrive at the state when they are unable to distinguish distinctly between good and bad material. Multi-government flourishes, and the prolific power of the officials is astonishing.

These are characteristics which are observable more or less in the bureaucracy of every State. Russian officialism, however, is distinguished in some particulars from that of any Western States.

It is well known that all the officials are divided into fourteen classes of "Tschin." The "Tschin" no doubt hails, as do so many things in Russia, from the days of the Mongolian rule, and is a Chinese word. The Chinese writing has a sign "Tschin" which signifies minister or servant,<sup>1</sup> but which originally represented a man in a bowing position. This man with a round back, the Chinese official, rules, as is well known, an Empire, the number of whose inhabitants far exceeds those of Russia, and yet is governed in as rigidly bureaucratic a manner as the former. In order to keep the army of officials well in hand, the mandarins are never left for long, generally only for three years, in one place; they are shifted continually through the whole Empire lest any should take root in one place or amongst any particular section of the population, lest officials and people should become politically dangerous by combining, lest the official should become dependent upon the people and independent of the Government. To this is added the policy of not allowing the reigning Manchu

<sup>1</sup> The sign looks thus



race, from which half the officials are recruited, to become merged with the Chinese.

In glancing back upon Russia it appears that not the name of the official alone hails from the Far East. The Russian army of officials is continually moving through the vast Empire and takes root nowhere. In smaller States this is of little consequence—whatever has taken root in Coburg is equally at home in Gotha—but in an Empire in which more than 120 languages are being spoken, in which civilisation shows such contrasts, the nomadic Tschinownik is not the coveted ideal of the official. I remember that after the introduction of Russian jurisdiction in the Baltic Provinces there was amongst the inflowing Russian Justices of the Peace one who had been sent straight from Trans-Caucasia. He told the following story from the time of his office there: "I had to condemn a man to a few months' imprisonment according to the law in force. As there are no prisons there I handed him over, according to the law, to the nearest commune elder, who had to lock him up and keep him under arrest. This elder, however, and his commune were nomads, and lived in felt tents, so called 'jurts.' After a few weeks I had occasion to inquire after the prisoner, and received the reply that he had disappeared. Upon further inquiries the commune elder admitted that he could not possibly have prevented the prisoner from escaping, that to guard him would have been too much trouble; and as the commune assumed that in any case the Justice of the Peace would not inquire for him again, they had put him to death at once." This is an example of justice which, regardless of local conditions, condemns to imprisonment without having prisons. And from such environments as these the Justice of the Peace is sent into the totally different surroundings of the Baltic Provinces, wholly strange to him, and which possesses most complicated forms of justice, custom, culture, the languages and the laws of which he does not understand. The natural consequence is not only an inefficient fulfilment of his official duties, but the

desire to leave as soon as possible this country which seems to him as strange as the steppe of the Kirghizes. Jurisdiction is the only branch of administration which has preserved until to-day some independence from the administrative caprice of the Centre, and in which the most industrious and honest elements of the country congregate. In law circles, and in a few Provincial Assemblies, something of the enthusiasm, the zeal, the devotion awakened by the reform of the "sixties" have still been preserved. But how is a love of duty to exist unless the official has at the same time the satisfaction of observing and enjoying the beneficent effects of his labours? How can the official take an interest in his work without enjoying the fruits of it? How can he care for these fruits when the field of his activity is, and must remain, foreign to him, since coming from afar he will soon have to leave it again? The nomadic Tschinownik who, in the administration of his office, listens to-day to the language of the Kirghizes, to-morrow to that of the Letts and Germans, the day after to Lithuanians and Poles, is bound to become a lifeless instrument; he cannot grow familiar with the land of his activity, much less take an interest in it. The activity of such an official must turn to "paper administration," as which it has long since been at home in Russia. The natural consequence is that his interests turn all the more exclusively to his own advantage. His interest is thus sub-divided; the "ego," *i.e.*, the personal favour of his superior, probably also the filling of his own pocket; the State, *i.e.*, the knowledge or the guess at the general desires of the higher powers; his district, *i.e.*, the care to prevent anything from happening which might go against him with the officials above. The real welfare of the people, and of the country which he really ought to serve, almost invariably comes last. In addition there is the fact that the demand for officials is enormous, but the number of good ones very small.

Integrity has never been at home amongst Russian officials; and it is not even to-day. Dishonesty and

officialism tend towards centralisation from below. Love of power, love of ease, distrust of superiors and self-confidence incite the Central powers to excessive centralisation, not only of their power but of the management of affairs in detail and in far-off local matters. Centralisation has reached a stupendous height under the present Government. The more energetic a Minister is, the more he is ready to remove existing defects in a province by treating them personally and to satisfy general wants by uniting in his person all the means for power. This is a tendency from which there necessarily follows this other: to create in the conditions of the State as deep-rooted as possible a state of uniformity. The more uniform the circumstances are, the more easily can the Minister supervise, watch and manage them; every deviation from the average, from mediocrity, is an obstacle; every show of activity in a province, a commune, a class, a person, looks suspicious. His principle is—Measures, not men! And the more strongly you centralise and equalise, the greater weight is laid upon the passing of laws and of ordinances, the more do personalities, characters, disappear into the background. Paper administration flourishes, the living germs of individual strength perish. Thus at last the grandest tree is doomed to die!

If one wished to enumerate one by one the distinctive features of Russia and England, or of Russia and the United States, there would be no end of them. To the most apparent differences, however, belongs the division of power in the one, and in the other, State. In Russia it is vested entirely in the Government; in the Anglo-Saxon States entirely in the people. In Russia all movement, all life starts from above; in the United States everything from below. In Russia the lava from the ever-active crater of laws and ordinances rises to an unsightly mass; in England there is no systematic collection of laws; and in America laws and ordinances are made by some thirty distinct States, which govern themselves. In Russia all initiative, all individuality

in the province, district or commune is suppressed ; in America the creative power lies with the individuals, the parishes, the separate States. In Russia, the work of the individual is reduced by the State to a minimum, it is paralysed, watched over distrustfully, hedged in by a hundred by-laws ; in America every nerve is alive, every muscle strained in unhampered strength and labour. In Russia fear creeps through all the members from the head to the feet ; in America everything and everybody is filled with self-confidence. In Russia every show of independence as regards justice, custom, language, faith, material and spiritual organisation of life is kept unstable, chained, crushed ; in America the free striving of all individual and collective powers produces hourly new rights and customs, new forms of faith, of material and spiritual life. Can there be the slightest doubt, in the face of such contrasts, for which of these States, competing in so many ways, the victory will be ? Can people in Russia still indulge in vain hopes of the youth of the Russian people, of its potential strength, which merely requires proper guidance in order to perform great things ? Will they not be converted by the empirical strength of the Anglo-Saxon State ?

For the present there seems to be no chance of this. The greatest working power, which has for a long time occupied a seat in the Russian cabinet, is endeavouring to-day, as we have seen, to get rid of the cornerstones of self-government which were laid forty years ago. Monsieur Witte goes on centralising and equalising, and other Ministers are giving him assistance. The financial fireworks are dazzling enough to hide a great deal of what is dark. With a Budget of nearly 2000 millions they think to conquer the world. Since the wonder has been accomplished, since Russian gold is to be found in everybody's pocket—if he has any money—they almost think themselves conjurers. The Financial Minister is to-day in reality the Chancellor of the Empire. In a Budget Report he announces an agrarian reform as though he were Home Minister ; in another he refers to

the Chinese imbroglio and to foreign politics in the tone of a Foreign Minister. He so completely manages the railways that the Minister of Domain only seems to be the head of his own department. Finally, he takes over the chairmanship in a conference of Ministers and high dignitaries for the discussion of a proposed agrarian reform. Even the law hardly dares approach him. By defending autocracy the Minister defends the power which he holds in the hollow of his hand. So great a power may be temporarily very useful in a State like Russia, when it is employed to revivify the exhausted parts of the Empire. This, as we have seen, the Financial Minister has attempted by raising the industries. Meanwhile, the vitality of these artificial industries has decreased considerably, and the two or three million men occupied in industries represent no strong industrial working class which might be equal to foreign competition. At the same time hardly anything has been done hitherto for the resuscitation of a 100 million farmers, for the revival of real fundamental national economy. With the construction of railways and factories alone the wide gulf which separates the Russian people from Western civilisation, even in our days, cannot be bridged over.

Monsieur Witte has now tackled even this problem by insisting with the monarch upon the appointment of a great commission for the reform of agrarian life under his leadership. The power of the Financial Minister is supported by the universal consciousness that he alone can avoid the downfall. Turgot is reported to have said, "Give me five years of assured dictatorship and I will save France." Who knows but Monsieur Witte may think likewise. But, if he should save Russia, it is not the Russia of to-day which will emerge. It will merely be a revolution from above by which he will endeavour to avoid a national rising.

## CHAPTER XVII

### QUESTIONS OF CONSTITUTION

THE struggle in which Russia is engaged with the civilised States of Europe and America is a desperate one. Yonder, in the West, the power, which formerly gravitated towards the monarch and the Government, is sinking into the ever-broadening strata of the people, and thus gaining in circumference, in durability, and in stability, although it must be confessed with the loss of warlike conquering mobility. Russia, on the contrary, is very mobile with regard to foreign enterprises, by drawing all the strength of the people from the lower strata to the top and by keeping the centre of gravity in the autocratic ruler, thus causing her strength to be more efficient for use, but to lose its value for the development of the people. The political conformation of modern Europe in the Parliamentary era has reached a point when the faith of many in this form of government which has been worshipped for a hundred years as a political idol has begun to totter. The confidence of Europe was shaken by the experience that the most perfect constitution, the finest Parliamentarism leads to ever-fresh social ferment, and that, the lower the strata which participate in political life the coarser the forms of this life become, and the more difficult the treatment of its substance. The growing influence of the masses upon politics magnifies political technique, restricts thought by fostering desire and furthers a sort of violence in the conflict of interests, which often brings in its train the excessive consumption of working capacity without adequate results. Logic and experience alike show that as soon as political power penetrates too low

down, the State runs the risk of being suddenly placed upside down, because despotism finds its way either into the masses or into the hands of one individual.

The Russians, who always follow with a very keen interest political life in Europe, have noticed long ago the decrease in the prestige of the Parliaments of Europe. From this they hastily draw the conclusion that Parliamentarism is played out and overlook the fact that, however Germans may abuse the weak points Parliaments show, it would be hard to find one German really desirous of setting aside popular representation, and of allowing the Emperor to govern as an autocrat. And if they do not seriously arrive at the conclusion that the constitutional form of government is played out, the desire for self-glorification, nevertheless easily prompts them to represent their own czaric constitution as arch-Russian, and far superior to the representative constitution of Europe. It is this same desire for originality which was the cause of the Russian village constitution being stamped as a national relic and maintained, to the misfortune of the people, even unto this day, and that confused brains to-day declare individualism and collectivism to be great and ancient Russian principles. They are thrown hither and thither between the desire for internal development and the dislike of confessing their incapacity, and thus they never advance. The condition of affairs is an exceedingly difficult one, not only for the patriotic Russian but also for the practical statesman. For he too must recognise that the internal development of Russia, in the way that European culture understands it, is only possible by renouncing traditions and external claims which no State and no people would renounce easily. Russia will never become a civilised State as long as she pursues, as she has done hitherto, a world-policy and national propaganda, and she will not be able to pursue this world-policy any longer if she renounces her former despotic bureaucratic centralisation. To add every day 238 square km. of land, and simultaneously to form a nationally and ecclesiastically

uniform Russian population, from a people speaking 120 different tongues, this only a despotic centralised Government may, I do not say accomplish, but attempt. With a population such as that of the United States the greatest Empire in the world might be ruled without great difficulties and with the most liberal form of government. To rush into Parliamentarism with a Russian population such as it is to-day would be a dangerous experiment, even if Russia were to renounce her position as a world-power which she enjoys to-day. On the other hand, it is hopeless to attempt to develop the Russian people with the present system of government, so as to enable them to compete with the European and American civilised States. Such as the people are to-day they will, in the most favourable case, be able for a certain time to support a standing army of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions and an enormous Budget, but they will be unable to overtake, either economically or intellectually, the leading civilised peoples behind whom they are lagging more and more. To accomplish this a slow internal process of education for independence, work and freedom would be required under a Government which, renouncing all external splendour, would devote itself exclusively to the economic and intellectual life of the people. To such a rupture with its tradition and inclination any Government would only resort in the case of extreme necessity, and more especially a Government whose position is particularly based upon foreign policy and the satisfaction of national and ecclesiastical feelings. Such a break could hardly take place except in consequence of great upheavals through war or revolution. It seems, however, that numerous elements in Russia are determined to accept even this condition, simply in order to emerge from the state of complete stagnation into which national life has sunk throughout the greater part of the Empire.

It is difficult to imagine a revolution breaking out in Russia such as would be possible in other countries. The natural conditions of the country, as well as the character of the Russian people, are diametrically

opposed to it. The only great rebellions which took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were rendered possible solely by the fictitious authority of the Czar. The fleet of Stenka Rosins had at its head a richly-adorned czaric Bawka, in which the Czar Alexai was supposed to be hidden. Pugatschew gave himself out to be Peter III. Nowadays the country population is roused by forged manifestoes of the Czar. It cannot, however, be denied that never before was there so much material for revolutionary risings as there is at the present time. The population of the few large towns adopts more and more openly the spirit which revolutionary propaganda discriminates. The middle classes, to a great extent even the upper classes, are enemies of the State; the country population is roused by hunger; the question whether the Army is still safe has already been mooted. And it cannot be answered in the affirmative. Russia is no longer secure from revolutions which might spread into larger circles and prove to be more than mere palace revolutions. Finances, national economy, self-government, these are the things which will decide the immediate future of the Empire.

We have seen in a former chapter how the most powerful man in Russia at the present time apparently stands for the maintenance of absolutism. He might be refuted with the words of a very important and experienced Russian statesman whom I have mentioned before.<sup>1</sup> The writer does not belong to the young revolutionaries but to the cautious and experienced people who, under the blows of the reaction, have maintained their equilibrium. He refuses the Parliamentary form of government as unsuitable for Russia because she as yet lacks political experience and schooling. But he asks that the unlimited power should be restricted and the monarch be freed from the corrupting influence of the reigning bureaucracy. For this purpose he thinks it would suffice to call together in the capital an assembly of men elected by votes; two

<sup>1</sup> *Russia on the Eve of the Twentieth Century.*

or three from each Provincial Assembly in the various Governments, which assembly would have to deliberate upon drafted laws and upon the Budget. At the same time the State Council would be purged of the members belonging to it according to the Tschin only, and be made into an Upper House. With this the Constitution would be given and nobody need worry his head any further. Necessarily the elected members, however, would be endowed with rights, since a merely advisory assembly must always be dependent upon the reigning bureaucracy, and the point at issue would be how to bridle the latter. A counterweight against the Tschinownicism surrounding the throne could only be afforded by a perfectly independent organ with a decisive voice in internal affairs. Only an assembly furnished with rights could restrict the will of the monarch himself, which is the first condition of law and order. "As long," says the writer, with a delicate understanding of the condition of things, "as long as the monarch does not accustom himself to the idea that his will is not all-powerful, that there exists a law independent from him, to which he must bow, it is useless to think of any sort of guarantee for rights, and for the bridling of the capricious official power—all will remain as before."

All this is very true and very clear, no doubt, only the question is by which road to reach this goal, in a State in which the desire for rights is so undeveloped in the great mass of the people and the longing for power so great among the organs of the Government. If in Russia there were existent the customs, the patience, the understanding for slow organic development, perhaps this road might be found. Let them renounce the part of a world-power and of a civilising State. Let them try not to balance the Budget by loans and great industrial enterprises; but, beginning at the other end, to further agriculture, local labour, the peasants and the home industries. Let them try to save by reducing the expenditure upon the Army to one-half. For this war strength may serve to

intimidate others and to make conquests in Asia, but it is quite superfluous for a peaceful Russia, working at internal development, because no enemies threaten Russia by land. This State is geographically situated so favourably for a defensive policy, that if it wished to disarm in all seriousness it could do so without asking or fearing anyone. Nobody is at all dangerous to Russia, except perhaps the Poles, and against them an army of millions of soldiers is not required. The Western Frontier districts are to-day economically and culturally the strongest supporters of the State; they may become so politically, too, as soon as the State gives up in these regions the struggle against nationality and confessions, and as soon as the Western Frontier is opened up to the influx of Western ideas. Germany is the most convenient and safest of neighbours Russia has, and might become the most useful if Russia decided to work hand in hand with her in the domains of political and economic life. It is in the interest of Germany that Russia should remain a world Power, and the same may be said *vice versa*. A closer union of both States would enable Russia to remain a world Power, and at the same time to restrict her armaments by land on a great scale. Only then will she become materially and intellectually the means of furthering internal development.

Nobody threatens her economic interests, except, perhaps, England, and to protect herself against England by a fleet the Russian Navy alone is much too small; moreover, it can never be so increased as to become equal to that of England—her small coast-line prohibits this. The interests which the fleet is to safeguard are not in proportion to the costs it entails, as long as the Navy cannot rely with certainty on the co-operation of other sea Powers. Without the help of another naval Power the Russian Navy of to-day is of little value, just as the Army costs far more than the interests which it is to protect are worth. A similar condition prevails in matters relating to the defensive position which Russia is taking up with regard to

## QUESTIONS OF CONSTITUTION 305

civilisation. She wishes to force Russian national culture, and culture cannot be forced. Instead of pursuing national conquests in the West which cost much and give no return, the frontier ought to be opened wide to the influx of foreign culture, the provinces with cultural elements of their own be fostered and provincial and individual activity from St Petersburg to Odessa be encouraged. Since absolutism in Europe has fulfilled its uniting centralising task, a federate State organism has become the leading principle of the civilised States. In this the Germanic people in America, Germany and England take the lead; and the greater a State is the more it requires internal variety in order to maintain external union, and even more in order to develop its culture. This is the case in Russia too, only that here another and milder form of the federative principle is in question, namely, provincial decentralisation. The Provincial Assembly should be the school in which political experience may be gathered and the art of self-government be learnt, from the want of which the Empire is sickening. In the whole Empire the religious conscience should be unhampered, and the persecution of the sects and of all those who do not belong to the Orthodox Faith should cease. But, with regard to these internal affairs, the slow and sure way is seldom taken in Russia. On the one hand, you see the saplings of provincial self-government planted yesterday uprooted to-day because they bear no fruit yet; and on the other, the desire to feast on the consciousness of Slavonic civilisation, and of being a world Power even before having obtained the means for this end, and before this civilisation itself has been created.

Moreover, are the people who wish for a Parliament so certain that universal suffrage, that a modern constitution will be the foundation of the liberty for which they are longing so much? True, they will obtain the freedom to speak and to write as they feel. But the freedom of individual, communal, provincial development? Local security from central coercion? . . .

Revolutions are more despotic than monarchs, and liberal doctrines are as violent as autocratic officialism. Even to-day the great mass of the lower classes are confronted with a nobility little familiar with public duties, and with an "intelligence" which, with a few exceptions, has even less notion of practical politics, but is filled the more with theoretical school knowledge which they think they understand. The Russian is by nature democratic; he inclines towards abstract doctrine and, considering the lack of political education and experience a Russian representative Government would be ruled by doctrines. An assembly representative of the whole Empire might issue decrees as violent as they were thoughtless; it might regard the right of the individual, this fundamental principle of all civilised Governments in the same way that the old officials did, and uniform centralisation in the administration would be arrived at once more without previous decentralisation in jurisdiction and legislation, without political schooling in provincial self-government. A Russian representative Government might easily be carried away to exceed the limits of its activity, and much refuse, perhaps even blood, would have to flow on the Russian plains before the longed-for state of liberty, right and order were attained.

We have heard a very powerful Minister declare the principle of autocracy to be the enemy of autonomy, and we have listened to well-known statesmen who would restrict autocracy by constitutional rights. Apparently these are contrasts, but in reality they are not. Power is with the minister and the bureaucracy, and experience certainly affirms that absolutism does not renounce itself of its own free will. The omnipotence of the State, however, has within itself limits which cannot be exceeded without the danger of arriving at impotence, and of calling up economic and social catastrophes. That Russia has approached dangerously near to these limits, Monsieur Witte himself seems to recognise.

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